Do you want to be more involved in your neighborhood? The Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association (EVNA) is looking for new members for both the Planning and Land Use Committee and the Board of Directors!

The EVNA Board of Directors (the Board) focuses on operation and general goals of EVNA including:

• Protect and enhance the character of the neighborhood, its historic resources and significant topographic features and open space
• Ensure that growth, development, and public access are compatible with and meet the needs of residents and the business community
• Protect and improve public health and safety
• Encourage friendly association among neighbors and businesses
• Provide an educational forum and community outreach to community partners

The Board meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the Chase Bank at the corner of 15th and Market Streets. We are looking for people interested in promoting the EVNA mission to “provide a public forum for the people who live, work, and play in the greater Eureka Valley area to discuss common issues and concerns and help develop solutions to improve our neighborhood.”

The EVNA Planning & Land Use Committee (PLUC) is looking for people knowledgeable in land use issues and the intricacies of the planning process and those who have a serious interest in learning. The committee discusses residential and commercial projects within Eureka Valley in all stages of the permitting process. It focuses on ensuring that these projects are compatible with and meet the needs of our residential and business communities. The committee meets the first Wednesday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 at the Chase Bank at the corner of 15th, Sanchez and Market Streets. In addition to discussing plans and permits, the committee delves into issues such as affordable housing, historic preservation, protection of green spaces and more.

If you’re interested in either of these important volunteer opportunities, contact EVNA at president@evna.com, or come to a meeting as noted above, or come to the next EVNA general membership meeting on Wednesday, May 24th, 7:00pm at Harvey Milk School at 4235 19th Street in San Francisco.
Become involved in your neighborhood!
We are always looking to expand our Board of Directors with committed, active members of the community.
If you’d like to learn more, email President@EVNA.org.

Does Your Street Have A Neighborhood Watch?

The Unit block of Hartford Street has one. The Unit block of Collingwood has one. Ford Street has one. The 300 block of Noe Street has one. And no doubt other blocks in the Castro have one.

“What?” you ask? They have a Neighborhood Watch. Participating in a Neighborhood Watch means keeping a neighborly eye on your street, your block. It means staying informed and keeping your neighbor informed about the goings on in and around your neighborhood.

A Neighborhood watch can help reduce crime, and will help in the event of an emergency like an earthquake.

For information about setting up a Neighborhood Watch contact SF SAFE: https://sfsafe.org/
Since I’m writing this month’s column in June, the month of LGBT Pride, I’m shifting my focus from policies regarding neighborhood development to a specific City policy that epitomizes so much of what I love about San Francisco. It’s a policy that San Francisco, in the tradition of classic liberal democracy, enacted to ensure equal protection of civil rights. It’s a policy that was implemented by San Franciscans, including many Eureka Valley residents, that impacted the lives of people across the country and, very personally, had a profound effect on my own life.

Twenty years ago this month, San Francisco enacted the Equal Benefits Ordinance which required that corporations holding city contracts provide their employees equal benefits whether husbands and wives, or domestic partners. This piece of legislation was the brainchild of three local activists; Carol Stuart, Geoff Kors and our current District 8 Supervisor, Jeff Sheehy. These three took their, then radical, proposal to the San Francisco Board of Supervisor members Susan Leal, Leslie Katz and Tom Ammiano, who, through hard work and tenacity, crafted an ordinance and got it passed by the Board without a single dissenting vote.

At that time, I was working at United Airlines Maintenance Base at San Francisco International Airport. United Airlines, despite repeated requests, refused to recognize my longtime domestic partnership with my “husband” Eric. And as providence would have it, United felt so strongly that they could ignore domestic partnerships, that the airline sued the City to block equal benefits. At that point in our lives, Eric and I were already long-time LGBT activists. However, up to that point much of our motivation had been abstract sense of fairness. With this case, the fight became deeply personal.

Nonetheless, our involvement in supporting the Equal Benefits Ordinance might have been nonexistent had it not been for the work of so many dedicated San Franciscans; it was a team effort. From City Attorney Louise Renne, to deputy city attorney Dennis Aftergut, to attorney, now Superior Court Judge, the Honorable Joe Quinn. These three, and many others in the City Attorney’s office, worked with LGBT employees at United to testify in the case. Their work put a human face on an otherwise theoretical challenge.

In my own part of this history, I met with Joe Quinn at the old Pasqua coffee shop at 18th and Castro and I remember how he was so passionate about hearing my stories that United

Continues page 7
THE CAFÉ is committed to ensuring that the Castro has a vibrant and active nightlife and a peaceful neighborhood.

All who live, work and play in our neighborhood deserve a positive and healthy community.

We are proud to help set the tone for working in partnership with fellow businesses, neighborhood leaders and residents.

It’s about respect. It’s about partnership. It’s about fun.
When Supervisor Scott Wiener was elected as our representative in the California State Senate, I was humbled to be asked to serve our community at City Hall. Six months into this job, I am pleased to report that my office has learned a lot from Senator Wiener’s service and we continue to do the work that District 8 neighborhoods deserve.

Making the Corbett Heights Zoning Controls Permanent

One of the most important roles the Board of Supervisors has is making sure zoning controls meet the unique needs of our neighborhoods.

Supervisor Wiener passed interim zoning controls to make sure Corbett Heights would have these protections. Specifically, his law requires conditional use for large single family residences of greater than 3,000 square feet.

Working with neighborhood leaders such as Gary Weiss from the Corbett Heights Neighbors, we proposed making these controls permanent, helping to protect this unique neighborhood from overdevelopment. The Planning Commission recommended approval to the Board, which then passed the controls.

The Planning Commission and Department continue to work on Citywide controls on large single family residences and I especially want to thank Commissioner Dennis Richards for his leadership in this area. The “residential expansion thresholds” are still a work in progress, and I encourage EVNA members to keep in touch with my office on these important planning matters.

In recent years, Supervisor Wiener convened key City departments, business owners and neighborhood leaders to ensure the events would be safe and successful. Our office continued that this year and I would especially like to thank everyone for the preparation. Meeting with community business owners helped us better understand what to expect.

Planning for the weekend also paid off. On Saturday afternoon, we had a one-alarm fire right in the heart of the Castro commercial district. The San Francisco Fire Department responded quickly and efficiently to protect life and property and I am pleased that the street was able to reopen quickly and no one was hurt in that blaze.

I want to thank Anne Kronenberg of the Department of Emergency Management, Martha Cohen and Paul Henderson of the Mayor’s Office, Mohammed Nuru from Public Works and City Administrator Naomi Kelly for helping lead the City’s response. Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White, Police Chief Bill Scott and Mission Station Police Captain William Griffin all helped lead the way in keeping our community safe.

A Safe and Successful Pride

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A Safe and Successful Pride

Protecting Our Investment in Dolores Park

Supervisor’s article continues on page 6
Supervisor Wiener and the community worked tirelessly to improve Dolores Park, investing millions of dollars in its transformation. Today, however, the park faces critical challenges regarding litter and public safety.

With the Recreation and Park Department, our office has proposed banning glass from Dolores Park and parks Citywide, because we know that broken glass presents a serious hazard to children, pets and park workers. In addition, the legislation will allow park patrol rangers to write citations rather than have those go to the District Attorney’s Office. The General Manager of the Recreation and Park Department would also be permitted to increase fines for dumping in Dolores Park up to $1,000. This amount is similar to highway littering fines.

Working with the Dolores Heights Improvement Club and many others, I am confident we can preserve Dolores Park and keep it clean and safe for residents and visitors alike.

Securing District 8’s Fair Share of the City budget

Supervisor Wiener served with distinction on the City’s Budget and Finance Committee, and I was honored to also be appointed to this panel. The Committee makes key spending decisions on the City’s $10 billion budget. This year was especially acrimonious because certain nonprofit groups wanted more funding than was available.

Chair Malia Cohen led a tremendously successful process for our City and for our neighborhood. From funding for neighborhood beautification and sidewalk gardens to community facilities such as the LGBT Center and local public schools, District 8 fared very well in the budget. I am grateful to Senator Wiener for his advice on the budget process and to my colleagues for their support of our neighborhood.

Your Chance to Weigh in on the Budget

In addition to the funding we secured for our neighborhoods through the budget process, we are launching a participatory budgeting project in District 8 to award $250,000 in funding to projects identified by community members. Grant amounts will range anywhere from $5,000 - $25,000 for qualifying projects.

Supervisor Column continues last page
had for so long ignored. He was interested in the benefits which United offered to employees and their families. But since United didn’t see Eric and me as family, those benefits were denied. We spoke about a time when Eric’s father was in the hospital and there was no consideration that I might access family-leave benefits. We also spoke about co-workers of mine who had truly compelling stories. The “wife” of one of my colleagues had died a few years earlier but the complete lack of recognition given to their relationship meant that there was no bereavement leave, no life insurance, and no consideration that my colleague had lost the most important person in her life.

And it’s not that we hadn’t told these stories to United; we had, it just hadn’t made any difference. But now we were telling our stories to City of San Francisco which brought them, so eloquently, to a courtroom where they helped to bring about a ruling that said United had to offer benefits.

While the City’s victory was not complete – United did not have to provide health insurance or pension coverage – the City won a victory in that the airline was required to offer bereavement and flight benefits. More importantly the ruling challenged United Airlines to examine their domestic partner policies: A year later, when the airline’s right to refuse some benefits was upheld, United chose to capitulate and became the first airline in the nation to offer domestic partner benefits.

After much behind the scenes work by yet more City workers, including the tireless efforts of Cynthia Goldstein from San Francisco’s Human Rights Commission, United agreed to implement equal benefits in December 1999 beginning with bereavement leave. As fate would have it, Eric’s father died that month. Without a hitch, United stepped up to the plate. I like to think that my father-in-law would have been proud to know that his son Eric was the first person to fly on a domestic partner pass as we traveled to New York for his funeral.

Almost a decade later United again stepped up to the plate when Eric himself died. Like my colleague whose testimony the City had eloquently conveyed to the court, I had lost the most important person in my life. But unlike my colleague, United gave me all the support I could have imagined – and not just leave and life insurance – people across the airline held me in a time when I needed a lot of holding.

But fast forward a few more years to a profoundly joyful moment when my husband Luis and I got legally married at San Francisco City Hall. As I stated then and as I write now, the City’s equal benefits law and all the people (including Stuart, Kors, Sheehy, Leal, Katz, Ammiano, Renne, Aftergut, Quinn, Goldstein, and many others) who made it happen; laid the groundwork for marriage equality.

During this fight there were many depositions where United executives told the City bluntly that they were under no obligation to recognize “those relationships.” But the City worked hard to counter these executives by recounting the stories of United’s LGBT rank and file with passion and eloquence. The City’s work changed the case from one about abstract principles to one about people. For the City, this case was about the impact that equal benefits would have on the lives of individuals.

So twenty years on, let’s pause to remember this history and its profound impact on our lives today. It’s this history such as this, history of San Francisco classic liberal democracy, that make me love our City, especially at this time of the year.
Neighbors' Faves!
Neighbors share their favorite places in the ‘hood!

This issue’s Faves come from Castro Neighbor Bonnie Kates

Castro Coffee Company
427 Castro Street
www.castro-coffee.com

This small storefront near the Castro Theater sells everything you need for your morning beverage, from freshly roasted whole beans, ground coffee, coffee blends, coffee makers and filters, to loose and packaged teas.

For the to-go crowd, choose from at least 6 different varieties of freshly brewed coffee each morning, ranging from a dark roast all the way to a nicely balanced medium roast, served up with friendly and efficient customer service. A variety of freshly-baked breakfast bars, cookies, donuts or packaged, gluten free baked goods are also available.

Dog Eared Books
489 Castro Street

As the name implies, this bookstore sells used books but also carries new titles, in genres ranging from non-fiction to fiction, and everything in between. The material is not restricted to any one particular audience but offers an eclectic range of subject matter. The focus is on gay, lesbian, transgender and queer literature, although not exclusively. If you are looking for a coloring book for a child or an adult, you can find it here. The store also has a small “Postcard Station” set up, encouraging citizens to write postcards and send them to their elected representatives. A gentle reminder about how democracy is intended to function.

The Red Jade
245 Church Street
www.redjaderestaurant.com

I discovered this restaurant a couple of years ago, and have been a regular customer since. This Mandarin style Chinese restaurant advertises “Free and Fast Delivery”, and they mean it; food is usually delivered within 30 minutes of placing the order. Any order over $15.00 includes dessert, and $20 or more includes a barbecue pork bun. For people who are sensitive to MSG, The Red Jade is a safe choice—no additives are used. The portions are generous and the price per dish is quite reasonable.

Handy Resources for Home

Call 311 for:
Report Litter and Graffiti, St. Cleaning, Abandoned Vehicles, St. Signs Missing/Damaged, Pot Holes

Police:
Non-Emergency: 553-0123
Report nuisance and non-urgent issues. Always ask for a CAD #.
Mission Station: 558-5400
Captain Bill Griffins email: bill.griffin@sfgov.org

Homeless Issues:
Community Awareness & Treatment Service (CATS) non-emergency: 734-4233

Parking and Traffic Issues:
SFMTA Parking Enforcement: 553-1200
SFMTA Parking Tickets: 701-3000

District 8 Supervisor Jeff Sheehy: 554-6968, jeff.sheehy@sfgov.org
LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Strategy
by Tre Allen

We welcome you to join the SF Planning Department & the Office of Economic and Workforce Development’s LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Strategy to preserve and promote LGBTQ cultural heritage in San Francisco. Cultural heritage is the expression of our community’s ways of living through beliefs, customs, practices, artistic expression, commerce and significant spaces. We need your help to safeguard LGBTQ cultural heritage in San Francisco. The Strategy started in April of 2017 and will be implemented in March of 2018. Currently five committees are incorporated into the Strategy and include: 1.) Business and Economic Development; 2.) Arts and Culture; 3.) Heritage and Historic Preservation; 4.) Community Service and Education; 5.) Land Use and Urban Design.

We’re excited to announce the first Community Outreach Forum for the LGBTQ Business and Economic Development Committee in the SF Planning Department’s LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Strategy.

Forum #1 Subject:
An Economically Healthy LGBTQ Community Benefits All of San Francisco

When: 5:30-7:00 pm, Thursday July 20th, 2017
Who: You! Plus Planning Dept staff, local CBDs, merchant groups, small businesses, hotel, restaurant, technology, travel, academic and business associations.
Where: Planning Department- 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400

How can you help?

1. Take the short Planning Department survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LGBTQCulturalHeritage
2. To learn more go to: http://sf-planning.org/LGBTQStrategy
3. To receive updates about the Strategy go to: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASFPD/subscriber/new?topic_id=CASFPD_241
4. To join a committee or to receive updates from specific committees, contact them here: http://sf-planning.org/LGBTQStrategy
The Rainbow Honor Walk salutes the groundbreaking achievements of noted LGBTQ persons throughout history. Each honoree will have a plaque placed in the sidewalks of the historic Castro District of San Francisco and a bronze plaque honoring José Sarria (1922-2013) will be on display at the reception.

Sarria, who was more widely known around San Francisco as The Grand Mere, The Empress Jose I, The Widow Norton, was a political activist and the first openly gay candidate to run for public office in the world. He ran for a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1961, and though he was ultimately defeated, his campaign alone made American history. Sarria was founder of the Imperial Court de San Francisco (playing off a tradition of comically exaggerated royal titles among gay men). It eventually grew to be known as the International Court System, which now has 65 chapters (each of which elects its own empress and emperor) in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Less than three years ago, 20 members of the LGBTQ community were memorialized by the installation of bronze plaques in the sidewalks of San Francisco’s Castro District. Following are the next 24 honorees for inclusion on the Rainbow Honor Walk:


- **W.H. Auden** (1907-1973) Gay English poet known for love poems such as “Funeral Blues,” poems on political and social themes such as “September 1, 1939,” and poems on cultural and psychological themes such as “The Age of Anxiety.”

- **Josephine Baker** (1906-1975) American-born dancer, singer, actress, and world-famous entertainer, embraced by France as a national treasure, who refused to perform for segregated audiences in the United States.

- **Gladys Bentley** (1907-1960) Lesbian American pianist, singer, and performer during the Harlem Renaissance whose comical, sweet, and risqué performances included songs about her female lovers.

- **Glenn Burke** (1952-1995) First openly gay major league baseball player who was discriminated against by Major League Baseball and whose raised hand, after a home run, led to the invention of the high five.

- **Quentin Crisp** (1908-1999) Gay English writer and raconteur whose flamboyance attracted increasing public interest in his views about social manners and the cultivating of style.


- **Marie Equi** (1872-1952) Lesbian American physician and political activist devoted to providing care to working-class and poor patients, providing health care information to women, and fighting for civic and economic reforms, women’s right to
vote and an eight-hour workday.

- **Fereydoun Farrokhzad** (1938-1992) Gay Iranian singer, actor, poet, TV and radio host, writer, and iconic opposition political figure who advocated for an open society that accepted all people.

- **Barbara Jordan** (1936-1996) Noted American politician and civil rights leader widely considered to be the first open lesbian elected to Congress, representing Texas in the House of Representatives.


- **Audre Lorde** (1934-1992) Lesbian American writer, radical feminist, and political activist whose works whose works shined a light on civil and social injustices she observed throughout her life.

- **Leonard Matlovich** (1943-1988) Decorated American soldier, widely recognized as the first to challenge the U.S. military’s ban on homosexuals serving in the armed forces.

- **Freddie Mercury** (1946-1991) Bisexual British singer, songwriter, record producer and lead performer with the rock group Queen.

- **Sally Ride** (1951-2012) Lesbian, physicist and first American female astronaut in space.


- **José Sarria** (1922-2013) Columbian born political activist, the first openly gay candidate for public office in the United States and founder of the Imperial Court system.

- **Maurice Sendak** (1928-2012) Gay American illustrator and author of children’s books, best known for Where the Wild Things Are.


- **Gerry Studds** (1937-2006) American politician and the first openly gay member of the U.S. Congress.

- **Lou Sullivan** (1951-1991) American author, activist, and female to male transgender pioneer who is widely credited for the modern understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity as distinct, unrelated concepts.

- **Chavela Vargas** (1919-2012) Lesbian Costa Rican-born singer known for her rendition of Mexican rancheras and for her contribution to other genres of popular Latin American music.

- **We’wha** (1849-1896) Zuni Native American Two-Spirit/Mixed Gender Tribal Leader who was male-bodied but performed primarily “feminine” tasks as well as serving as a mediator.

The Rainbow Honor Walk will eventually extend from the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy on 19th Street at Diamond down to Castro Street—the LGBT community’s “Main Street”—and will continue up Market Street with additional extensions on 18th Street. On Market Street, San Francisco’s main thoroughfare, the Walk will continue to the LGBT Center at Octavia Boulevard.

All funds for manufacture of the Rainbow Honor Walk are raised privately, with each plaque costing approximately $7,000. A major source of income comes from the San Francisco Human Rights Campaign Action Center and Store (575 Castro Street) through the sale of commemorative mugs, t-shirts and lapel pins, which has generated over $20,000 for the Rainbow Honor Walk.

Individuals interested in contacting the Rainbow Honor Walk may do so by email at info@rainbowhonorwalk.org or by mail to Rainbow Honor Walk, 584 Castro Street, #113, San Francisco, California 94114.

Contact can also be made via Facebook by searching “Rainbow Honor Walk”. Information can also be found online, and donations made, through the Rainbow Honor Walk website at www.rainbowhonorwalk.org.
Update: Castro Retail Strategy Panel

Guest Contributor: Mark D McHale, Resident and Panelist

It’s true the Castro/Upper Market business corridor is experiencing some of the highest rates of vacancy as compared to other commercial areas across the city, with greater than 10% of storefronts being empty (either temporarily or long-term) as of last count by the Castro Business District (CBD).

In 2014, local groups, including the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, the Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association, the Castro Merchants, the Castro Business District, and with a grant from city government, pooled funds to commission the retail study which would assess the current status and direction of consumer shopping habits, identify retail/commercial trends and challenges, and identify local demographics that support brick and mortar stores in the area.

The report was published in 2015, entitled “The Castro & Upper Market Retail Strategy Study” and can be found in its entirety at: www.castroretail.com. The project is being supervised and administered by Andrea Aiello of the CBD.

The broader purpose of the panel is to move the report recommendations off the paper and into reality. A business attraction consultant, Dr. Jason Luger, has been brought in to work with the panel to define best outcomes for the creation of a dynamic retail/commercial experience that is relevant and desirable to today’s visitors and consumers, and in doing so, one of the benefits would be to reduce the number of vacant storefronts.

As outlined by the Retail Strategy Study Report, a panel of local individuals and business persons has been created to carry on the conversation initiated by the study. This panel (the Retail Strategy Panel) has met regularly for a year now, and a major topic of discussion has been the complex and dynamic issues behind the high number of vacancies in the district.

Since the first meeting, the panelists were adamant to add two very important factors impacting the study findings which contribute to the sense of crisis and urgency: the growing momentum of Internet, and the addition of ~60,000sf of additional new commercial space. These dynamics influence and intensify why we are experiencing such high vacancy rates in our neighborhood commercial district, and are indeed the elephant in the room we cannot avoid discussing.

The dramatic and broad changes brought about by the Internet is affecting retail on the world wide web taking place every day. The retail study report identifies the need to create a dynamic retail/commercial experience that is relevant and desirable to today’s visitors and consumers.

Retail Strategy continues on page 15
Art In The Castro – Meet SF Open Studios Artists
By Rob Cox

This July 29th (Saturday), from 11-5, Jane Warner Plaza will be populated with local San Francisco artists. Here’s an opportunity for you to watch these artists create their work and a chance for you to talk with the artists about what they do, how they do it and why.

These artists all participate in the San Francisco wide program of Open Studios. San Francisco Open Studios is a program that is run by ArtSpan, a non-profit organization that is committed to cultivating a vibrant, accessible, and world-class art community in San Francisco. ArtSpan promotes the city’s unique creative energy locally and globally. They also champion an inclusive art experience by providing hundreds of local artists with the equal opportunity to showcase their work and make direct connections to diverse audiences and patrons. It is ArtSpan’s belief that artists play a vital role in society and that broad public engagement with their work is essential to defining a new cultural environment for our changing city.

ArtSpan is known for SF Open Studios, this year will be the 42nd annual event and is the oldest and largest open studios program in the country, featuring an annual, month-long art event from mid-October to mid-November that showcases over 800 emerging and established San Francisco artists in their studios.

Each weekend, participating artists in their designated section of San Francisco welcome the public into their homes and workspaces to share their artwork and engage in dialogue. The popular SF Open Studios Guide is the travel companion for each weekend of the event, featuring artwork examples from each artist, maps, and articles.

During the month-long event, ArtSpan hosts the SF Open Studios Exhibition, displaying works from 450 artists and kicks off with Art Launch, a public grand opening welcoming 500 attendees into the SOMArts exhibition space. Over 80,000 attendees visit studios during the free event throughout San Francisco.

Part of what the artists will be promoting is the Open Studios Hub Exhibitions. Hubs are local venues that will highlight artists. Some of the Hub locations this fall in the Castro area will be Hearth, Art Attack, etc. These venues will feature artwork from artists who will be participating in Open Studios and will give you a chance to view several works by these artists.

In July at Jane Warner Plaza neighbors and passerby will have the opportunity to meet several artists who will be participating in this years Fall Open Studio. Stop by and say “hello” and maybe even buy some art!

Shane Izykowski is a multi media artist working in photography, special effects, installations, video and more.

ShaneIzykowski.com

Victoria Veedell paints atmospheric landscapes using light as an element to describe a mood or a feeling.

Veedell.com

Audrey Heller is a photographer who creates entire worlds in miniature using common items and tiny figures.

AudreyHeller.com

John Kraft is a painter and media artist who uses graphic imagery to tell stories.

JohnKraft.com

Marius Starkey is a painter who paints primarily plein air and has given demonstrations at Bay Area museums.

Artistmarius.com

Rob Cox is a painter who continues the styles and topics of the Bay Area Figurative Movement with references to David Park, Richard Diebenkorn and others.

RobCoxArt.com

Kate Marsh works primarily in watercolors in a loose and expressive style.

KateMarsh.com

The artists and ArtSpan wish to thank the Castro/Upper Market CBD for hosting this and other events throughout the Summer.
Hartford Street looking North from 18th to 17th St. circa 1912. Image from OpenSFHistory.org

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stage; it has changed the way our society views and uses retail and social spaces, and the function of physical commercial and retail spaces (brick and mortar stores). The panel is keenly aware of this paradigm shift, and is attempting to integrate dynamic and novel solutions dealing with these changes into its best outcomes.

Additionally, locally, the dozen or so new ground level commercial spaces which have recently come on line has increased the available square footage, and thus added to the perception of higher vacancy rates. These spaces are undeveloped shells, and landlords and prospective tenants have been reluctant to pay the “first in” costs to open and operate a business, especially the formidable costs of city red-tape, extensive delays, and needed costly tenant improvements like a restaurant build out.

With these additional disruptors in mind, the panel has identified important factors that impact the challenges facing new and existing business in today’s retail/commercial environment, including:

- the undeniable decline in utility and need for traditional physical commercial/retail spaces due to Internet shopping.
- the discord between Castro/Upper Market landlord lease price expectations and actual business-sustainable rates.
- the difficulty in navigating an often byzantine, expensive and time consuming process to open and/or operate a business in San Francisco.
- the desire of potential business owners to have shorter lease commitments and reduced overhead costs (i.e. the increased demand for “pop-up” style venues).
- the ever-changing wants and needs of shoppers and visitors.

Though vacant storefronts are a considerable challenge for any community, The Castro/Upper Market communities are actually in a better position to address and solve this new retail reality than most others—by recognizing the changing retail landscape sooner, commissioning the study, and forming the working panel, we can leverage the advanced findings to implement working solutions faster.

The panel is soon to publish its “next steps” outlining specific actions stakeholders will need to acknowledge and embrace in order to support new and existing businesses, reduce vacancies, and continue to attract consumers and visitors to the Castro/Upper Market business district. Please look for the follow up article in the next newsletter.
This participatory budgeting program has previously been deployed in North Beach (District 3), West Portal (District 7) and Potrero Hill/Bayview Hunters Point (District 10), and has proven to be a great way for community residents to identify and fund projects. For more information on participatory budgeting or to suggest a potential project, please contact Justin Jones of my staff at 415-554-6968.

We’re here to Serve You

We are here to serve you with ongoing projects as well as new ideas or concerns. Please feel free to email me directly: jeff.sheehy@sfgov.org or contact my office at 415-554-6968.