Corbett Heights Neighbors

Corbett Heights Neighbors (CHN) is one of the many neighborhood associations that operates within the greater EVPA boundaries. Our boundaries are: Market Street on the south, Clayton Street on the west, 17th Street on the north and Douglass Street on the east. We also include the 400 block of Corbett - through Iron Alley.

CHN formed in 2004. We currently serve over 750 households. Our general membership meetings take place at 7:30PM on the 4th Thursday of January, April, July and October, at the Castro Community Meeting Room - 501 Castro Street, 2nd floor.

The event that has dominated the neighborhood for the last many years is utility undergrounding. In the 1970’s our neighborhood became one of several in the city whose residents opted to contribute towards having all of the cables for PG&E, cable and telephone placed underground. After an unbelievably lengthy, noisy and frustrating several years the last few utility poles are being removed. We can see the sky without the overhead spiderwebs! And it now seems worth the wait.

One of the companies that PG&E had subcontracted with to do much of the excavation ran over their promised completion date by several months. They also caused so many problems during their run, that they were forced to pay huge fines. Since Corbett Heights residents had to suffer through the delays and other mishaps, it seemed appropriate that we would be the beneficiaries of a portion of those fines.

Hartford Street Neighborhood Association

by Rob Cox, Hartford Street

It started the spring of 2007. A group of neighbors were out on the sidewalk talking when another neighbor, Bob, walked down his front steps to his car parked at the curb. We all gave the “good morning neighbor” wave and continued our conversation.

The next thing we saw was Bob bounding out of his car looking astonished and a bit shaken. There was a homeless person in his back seat. The guy broke into Bob’s car, spent the night and trashed it.

Another neighbor walking across the street said “call the cops on this guy, he’s bad news.” And sure enough, when officer Fraser apprehended this man a block away he had 35 priors, including assault and breaking and entering. We found out he had been breaking into houses and terrorizing businesses - among a litany of other crimes. He has since been put in jail and we haven’t seen him since.

The small group of neighbors that filed complaints that day began talking about some of the not so nice events that were going on in our neighborhood. Topics included break-ins, gay rape, loud partying at 2 A.M., homeless people camping out on the street and on our doorsteps and the situation surrounding Halloween. The more we talked the more we were convinced we should do something about these problems as neighbors. So, we contacted San Francisco SAFE.

San Francisco SAFE is the city’s leading crime-prevention education organization. They help residents, police, and community groups work together to create safe, vibrant neighborhoods by providing violence prevention education, public safety information and community organizing services. (www.sfsafe.org)

Hartford Street is a residential street that runs behind Castro Street and as such gets a lot of overflow traffic – both foot and vehicular – from the Castro

Next EVPA Meeting:
Thursday, 15 January at 7:30 PM
NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION,
Castro Community Meeting Room
501 Castro (above BofA)
Eureka Valley Promotion Association:
Working to Make the Neighborhood a Better Place
By Scott Wiener, EVPA President

In November, I was honored to be elected President of the Eureka Valley Promotion Association (EVPA). Since 1881, EVPA has been the neighborhood association for Eureka Valley – i.e., what we now call the Castro, Duboce Triangle, Upper Market, and surrounding neighborhoods. EVPA has focused, and continues to focus, on improving the neighborhood in various ways, from ensuring sound planning and land use policies, to improving public spaces, to promoting neighborhood safety, to increasing economic vitality. We work on these issues on our own and in collaboration with other neighborhood and merchant associations.

Central to EVPA’s mission is to engage our community’s stakeholders, and particularly those who live in the neighborhood, so that we can participate in and help guide the development and diversity of our neighborhood. If we as residents abdicate this role by not being involved, decisions will be made for us instead of by and with us. Neighborhood associations like EVPA play a key role in empowering people to have a say.

I have many ideas about EVPA’s focus over the next year. However, I also know that organizations do best when they focus on a few key priorities. Following are some ideas for EVPA in 2009:

- Focus on Public Spaces: The Castro and surrounding neighborhoods are densely populated. We have limited public space in the neighborhood’s interior (as opposed the wonderful and large public spaces, Duboce Park and Dolores Park, on our periphery). Thus, we need to focus on maximizing and caring for the public spaces that we do have. EVPA will work with the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District to push for implementation of the Streetscape Project, which will greatly improve the neighborhood’s sidewalks and other public spaces on and around our streets. We will work with other organizations on the proposed temporary closure to vehicular traffic of 17th Street between Castro and Hartford Streets, which will create additional pedestrian open space. The creation of a Farmer’s Market on Noe Street off of Market will be a great addition to the public space, and we will help to make that a reality. We also hope that Harvey Milk Plaza will become a more usable public space, well beyond serving as an entrance to Muni.

- Neighborhood Block Parties: The key to a healthy neighborhood is neighbors knowing neighbors. The more connected we are to one another, the healthier we are as individuals and the healthier and more vibrant the neighborhood is. For many years, block parties have been a key way for neighbors to get to know each other. They are a key opportunity for people to socialize, catch up, talk about issues in the neighborhood, and so forth. They also can lead to better and stronger neighborhood associations. EVPA is interested in encouraging neighbors to organize block parties. We will be exploring the possibility of putting together a “block party kit” explaining the steps to obtain a temporary street closure permit and to get the ball rolling on a great block party.

- More Communication: To engage the neighborhood, EVPA needs to communicate with them. We put out a newsletter every other month, and we will be working hard to distribute it widely so that people know what we’re doing and can participate.

- Continued Participation in the Planning Process: EVPA has always done a great job monitoring development in the neighborhood and working with property owners and developers to ensure that projects are appropriate for the neighborhood. Our planning committee will continue to do this important work.

- Increased Membership: EVPA currently has around 80 members. This is a good start, but we need to increase that number. By having more members, we will increase neighborhood participation and strengthen the organization’s voice in advocating for the community. You can join EVPA by going to www.evpa.org. Dues are $20 for an individual, $30 for a household, and $40 for a business.

These are ambitious goals, but they are good ones. Please join us to help make them a reality. Our next meeting is Thursday January 15 at 7:30 p.m. NOT at EVRC but instead at the Castro meeting room, 501 Castro Street, 2nd Floor. I hope to see you there!

And get other late-breaking announcements about Eureka Valley events by subscribing to the EVPA announcement list, it’s free - it’s easy - it’s secure and your e-mail address is never shared! www.evpa.org/subscribe
Too Many Vacant Shops in the Castro?
by Alan R. Beach-Nelson

One reason people mention that they are supportive of the Walgreen’s expansion into the Laundromat on 18th is because “there are too many vacant storefronts in the Castro.” The other reason, “Walgreen’s is a good neighbor,” was debunked, I think, in the last Eureka!

Being a curious type, I walked the streets of the Castro Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD), 17th to 19th and Noe to Diamond, counting shops to see if this was true. Please note I ONLY included the Castro NCD. It does not include Upper Market which is a separate NCD. Though, if memory serves, all shops on Market from Noe to Castro are occupied, which therefore increases the occupancy rate.

I counted only ground floor spaces. When a shop occupied more than one, I counted the total storefronts, e.g., Walgreen’s on Castro occupies 3. Though not a professional statistical analysis, I intended to verify whether impression matches reality, and in my opinion, it does not.

Truth is we have 94% occupancy and only 6% vacancy rates—see chart. Out of a total of 148 street level storefronts only 9 are vacant.

Analyzing the numbers even further, of the 9 vacancies, 66% include spaces that are off the market due to the owners/lessor’s own intent, e.g. Les Natali who owns the four “Patio” spaces on Castro that have inexplicably been vacant for nearly 10 years, and the former Pendulum on 18th, or the Laundromat which Walgreen’s suspiciously snapped up only to leave it vacant for nearly two years. If one takes these 6 storefronts out of the count, the occupancy rate shoots to 98% with ONLY 3 vacancies out of 148 storefronts. I’d say our occupancy is very, VERY good.

Of course, I understand that a few high visibility spaces do create a sense of blight. At long last things seem to be moving quickly with Les’ properties—THANK YOU! Levi’s is open, Ritz is filled with the GLBT History Museum exhibit and Welcome Home will soon be Café Mystique. This combined activity is sure to make the Castro feel much more vibrant, something all of us want. Perhaps Walgreens will open up the Laundromat for an artist gallery while it contemplates next steps—it certainly would be better than an empty storefront!

Finally, I know that some will find all of this analyzing of the numbers as a demonstration that EVPA is anti-business. Personally, I most certainly am not anti business and in fact I am pro-business. I fully support businesses that reflect the community, work with, respect, and support the whole neighborhood. However, I am not supportive of those that try to dominate the neighborhood or overtake the “village” charm that is what makes the Castro special. I would be opposed to De La Sole, the Midnight Sun, Blue, or any other single business if they wanted to occupy 5 storefronts in the Castro. I feel we need variety, not 5 storefronts occupied by one business like Walgreen’s wants.

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**Castro storefronts (Ground floor shops only)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Vacant</th>
<th>Occ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Castro between 17th-18th:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East (All American Boy)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total Castro Street, 17th to 18th</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Castro between 18th-19th:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East <em>(Patio - 4, Title Co.)</em></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total Castro Street, 18th to 19th</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17th Street, South side only</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total 17th Street</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18th E of Castro (to Noe):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total 18th East side</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18th W of Castro (to Diamond):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North <em>(former Pendulum and Café Castro)</em></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South <em>(Laundromat Walgreen’s wants)</em></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total 18th W of Castro</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19th Street</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total 19th West side</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total:</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taking Natali’s Patio (4 spaces) & former Pendulum and Walgreen’s (laundromat) six intentionally vacant spaces out of vacancies, totals are: 148 3 98%
businesses. So, with a few neighbors taking the lead, we met monthly at the Eureka Valley Community Center and wrestled with these issues. Through these meetings we created the Hartford Street Neighborhood Association (HSNA). A local neighborhood association established to help advocate for a safe, informed and social environment on Hartford Street.

Since we have been meeting we have had at least two chronic criminals removed from Hartford. There has also been a notable decrease in people sleeping on the sidewalk and in doorways. We also helped with making sure the Cafe would meet its conditions of use before they were allowed to expand.

The group meets monthly and is working to help neighbors interact and keep each other informed about events and goings on and also provide activities that will help Hartford Street become a more familiar group of neighbors. The idea is to watch out for each other and become better neighbors. We also want to provide annual or semi annual get-togethers on our block.

If you live on Hartford Street you can stay informed by going to our Yahoo group and signing up a

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/HartfordStreetNeighborhoodAssoc

of the assessed fines. After about a year of phone calls and emails, and thanks to Dan McKenna of DPW, it was agreed that the stretch of Corbett Avenue that became mincemeat during all the construction would be repaved. This repaving is taking place now.

If any of you has driven down 17th Street from the top of the hill at Clayton, you know how easily your vehicle can pick up speed. For pedestrians, the speed of passing vehicles can be, and has been, devastating. Over the years there have been several attempts to implement some form of traffic calming measure, but nothing drastic has ever happened.

Earlier this year I met with several residents of 17th Street to discuss traffic calming, contacted MTA - the department that handles this throughout the city, and arranged for a representative to speak at our general membership meeting. We are now not only slated to receive a traffic-diverting median sometime next year, but also a solar "mileage counter" that will be located on the steepest part of the 4300 block of 17th Street.

Improvements can happen, but they take a lot of work!

Gary Weiss
President, Corbett Heights Neighbors & EVPA board member

Eureka Valley Promotion Association recognizes that there are many local or geographically focused neighborhood associations such as HSNA, CHN, 19th Street, Dolores Heights, etc.

We fully support these groups and welcome active involvement and representation in EVPA by members of these groups. Please share your neighborhood groups information and news with EVPA membership in a future issue of the Eureka! by emailing Alan.Beach@evpa.org.
Minutes of November 20, 2008 Membership meeting

- The President called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
- The September minutes were approved on motion and second.
- The President provided the treasurer's report, since the treasurer was unable to attend the meeting.
- Representatives from Whole Foods presented their plans for development of the S&C Ford site into a Whole Foods and adjoining housing. The representatives presented various schematics of the project. EVPA members asked questions, and a discussion was held. No action was taken on the project.
- The Planning Committee presented its report, including an update on the Planning Department's discretionary review reform project, the possibility of having a universal planning notice, the status of the Housing Element, and various neighborhood projects.
- The nominating committee presented its proposed slate of officers for 2009:
  - President: Scott Wiener; Treasurer: Demien Quesnel; Secretary: Alan Beach-Nelson; Members at Large: Dennis Richards, Gary Weiss
  - Upper Market Alliance Rep: Judy Hoyem
  - Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods Rep: Demien Quesnel
- On motion and second, the membership unanimously elected the proposed slate.
- Scott Wiener, incoming president, discussed various ideas for 2009, including more active committees, a focus on public spaces, and forums during membership meetings.
- The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. The next meeting (and all 2009 membership meetings) will be held at the Castro Community Room, 501 Castro St.
SUNDAY SALON PRESENTS
At Eureka Valley Recreation Center Auditorium
Saturday January 10th 7:30
Sunday January 11th 3:00
A special Showcase production of San Francisco Free Civic Theatre (SFFCT). Two original short plays by San Francisco writers and brief scenes from other new works, presented by Sunday Salon.

Sunday Salon is a local group of theatre artists engaged in play reading and the development of their new works. The one-act plays “Every Witch Way” by Kristin Anundsen and “Housebroken” by Frank Gigliotti will receive their first performances, directed by JeNeal Granieri.

Rachel Heyman, former Castro resident & EVPA officer, is performing at this event. Come on by; it’ll be a hoot!!

Admission and refreshments are FREE.

EVPA
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address service requested
www.evpa.org