Proposed Projects Will Change the look and feel of Upper Market
By Judith Hoyem, EVNA Planning/Land Use Chair

Big changes are coming to Upper Market. Two major building developments are in the works for the intersections at 16th, Noe and Market Streets and a third one at Castro and Market. In addition, Trader Joe’s is moving ahead with plans to occupy the space at 2288 Market Street. These projects, as proposed, will dramatically change the appearance of Market Street, alter the pedestrian experience, and potentially increase traffic congestion.

More importantly, some of these projects are seeking “Spot Zoning” in order to get approval to construct buildings far larger than current codes allow. For example, there is a preliminary proposal to build an 8 story 85-foot tower at Market and Castro on the RC gas station lot, 20’ taller than is currently allowed. While no plans have been submitted, we have concerns about the potential for this precedent setting “Spot Zoning,” and the impact it will have on the character of the Castro, especially at such a prominent intersection.

The City Planning Department reviews building and commercial projects to make sure they comply with all codes and guidelines. The Department also seeks input from the public on potential impacts in order to suggest or require mitigation measures. The Planning Committee of EVNA is reviewing these projects and providing feedback to the Planning Department. We will be soliciting reactions at the Membership meeting on May 19.

Projects:

1. 2299 Market Street at 16th (“hole in the ground”): Permit application review has been substantially completed by City Planning. A fifty-foot tall apartment building, 18 units with one parking space per unit. 4,800 square feet on ground floor divided into one large retail space and one long, narrow one.

2. 2301 Market Street at Noe (Gold’s Gym): Permit application has not yet been submitted. Site is zoned for a maximum height of 50 feet. Owners want to expand the gym by adding a floor, which is permitted. They also propose adding two additional floors of residential rental housing, which would exceed the permitted height limit and would require legislation by the Board of Supervisors to create a Special Use District for that one building, a form of spot zoning.

3. North/West corner of Castro and Market (RC gas station): Permit application has not yet been submitted. 65 feet of height is permitted. Project sponsors want to go higher and are beginning outreach. Residential over retail. No plans have been presented yet.

4. Trader Joe’s (Market and Noe Center, 2288 Market St.) TJ’s to occupy the whole building. Question: the impact of greatly increased traffic and parking on the adjacent neighborhood and whether any mitigations are proposed or possible.

EVNA supports responsible development that is compatible with the neighborhood and meets the needs of the residents and the business community. Be sure to attend the May 19th membership meeting of EVNA when we will discuss these four major projects. You may also communicate your views on these projects at any time by e-mail to Judy.Hoyem@evna.org or by letter to EVNA, PO Box 14137, SF, CA 94114.

How Safe is the Neighborhood?
By Rob Cox, EVNA Secretary

How does a neighborhood like ours balance the wide variety of activities it hosts while maintaining a respectful approach to its many residents? It’s a question that is on a lot of lips these days.

The Castro neighborhood has about 15 bars and clubs. It is also a very dense residential neighborhood and the transition is extremely abrupt. Along the east side of Castro Street, for example, is charming Hartford Street. Along the west is quiet Collingwood.

Castro Street at night is teeming with bar and club goers and restaurant patrons. When the late night establishments close and the party goers pour out onto the streets, often boisterous and in groups, there are often loud disturbances – and worse - that follow.

In recent years there have been a number of incidents that come to mind: loud parties on street corners or in the parking lot off of Castro Street; Officer Werner, the Patrol Special Officer hired by a few of the bars to patrol at night, having her arm broken; home and auto break-ins; muggings; rapes. Most of these incidents take place between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m.

The neighborhood bar owners and the EVNA would like to do more to minimize these disturbances and criminal behavior and are beginning to work to make the neighborhood a safer place to live and visit.

The bar and club owners in the neighborhood have banded together to create Castro After Dark. The basic idea behind Castro After Dark is to provide a roving security presence that patrols the main corridor and minor branches off of Castro Street and Market and Castro Streets where the majority of bars and clubs are located.

Although Castro After Dark is not yet up and running, the plans are in the works.

EVNA is a big supporter of this program and applauds the bar and club owners for this initiative. Accordingly, EVNA has appointed a committee to begin working as a liaison to the Castro After Dark leadership to address and advise on concerns and challenges. The core members of the committee have been assigned and are EVNA Board members. EVNA is also looking to recruit other volunteers from the neighborhood to join the committee. If you want to ensure that the Castro remains a vibrant, thriving destination that also respects the rights of residents, we encourage you to join the committee by emailing me, Rob.Cox@evna.org.

The Castro After Dark members are scheduled to present their plans at the next EVNA General Meeting, March 24th, 2010, 7:00 p.m. at the Chase Bank Community Room (Market & Sanchez).
Spring Is In The Air, Everywhere I Look Around
By Alan Beach-Nelson, Castro/EVNA President

While EVNA has developed two priorities on which to focus over the next year, “Quality of Life” and “Planning/Land Use” – see front page articles – there are several important “happenings” on the horizon as we move into spring:

- Popular Castro Farmers’ Market Returns to Noe at Market, Wednesday, April 7, 4:00 to 8:00pm. This hugely successful weekly Market will run every Wednesday until October 27. The Castro Farmers’ Market is sponsored by MUMC with the Pacific Coast Farmers’ Market Association.
- 17th Street Plaza and Harvey Milk Plaza improvements. The 17th Street Plaza is set to be permanently established with substantial improvements. The Castro Community Benefits District has secured a Grant from the Mayor’s Office for improvements. New bench seating and landscaping also is planned for Harvey Milk Plaza, funded by a City Community Challenge Grant.

Watch for updates in our May issue of Eureka! I hope to see you around the ‘hood as we enjoy the many activities right here in the “Sunny Heart of the City!”