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Help and hope for homeless families

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# THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ APRIL 2014



RENDERING COURTESY OF KB HOMES

A new residential and retail complex is in the works at Bush and Divisadero.

## The Buzz ON Divis

Change is coming — especially at the corner of Divisadero and Bush



ERIK ANDERSON

By CHRIS BARNETT

THE FOUR CORNERS of the dingy intersection of Divisadero and Bush won't win any architectural awards today, but the location is increasingly prized by investors, and all four corners are in transition.

Bulldozers are rumbling over the dirt on the southwest corner, home for decades to the San Francisco Community Convalescent Home. More recently it has been a slot machine for speculators. Owner Jocelyn Carter cashed out seven years ago for \$4.6 million from a San Francisco builder and his Manhattan money partner. Then, in foreclosure, they lost the location to a Mill

Valley condo developer and investor who paid \$14.6 million in 2012 — and quickly flipped it to Los Angeles-based megabuilder KB Home for a jackpot \$38 million.

Now a six-story residential and retail complex with 81 condos is under construction, with a grand opening slated for early next year. Price tags on some units are sure to top a million apiece.

Across the street, King of Falafel, the *Chronicle's* nine-time winner of the best falafel in San Francisco award, is living on borrowed time. The building housing the 44-year-old family-owned Palestinian eatery was quietly sold more than a year ago to San Francisco real estate investor and saloonlord Rick Howard, owner of Harry's Bar on Fillmore Street and four other longstanding drinking and dining dens in the city.



King of Falafel will ride out its lease until January. Then Howard will give the building a seismic upgrade and renovation — and then, he says, either turn the 2,025 square foot downstairs space into a new barroom and restaurant of his own design or lease

it out to a new tenant. In late March the space was listed on Loopnet.com, a sort of commercial real estate industry Craigslist, for \$6 a square foot, or \$12,000 a month rent — twice the increased rent on the space next door — suggesting he may not open his own bar there if a tenant is willing to pay his price.

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April 18, 12 noon: Good Friday

April 20: Easter Sunday Services

7 am Sunrise Service

9 am & 11 am

10 am Egg Hunt

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The eucalyptus tree in Cottage Row was cut down, but its stump — too big to grind — will be left in place.

## Fewer Trees on Cottage Row

Redwoods, eucalyptus cut; modest renovations planned

**T**HERE HAD BEEN talk for years about cutting down the rapidly growing redwood trees in the park along Cottage Row, between Bush and Sutter just east of Fillmore. Suddenly one day in mid-February the five redwoods were felled, along with a large eucalyptus tree and other smaller trees.

Howls of outrage from many neighbors now seem to be giving way to acceptance.

"I was opposed to cutting the trees when they could have been trimmed," said Cottage Row resident Jeff Staben. "But now that you see the light and openness, it's nice. If only people would stop using the park as a dog potty."

A crew from the city's Department of Recreation and Parks removed the trees and the redwood stumps and has begun to refurbish the mini-park, which serves as a front yard for the historic Cottage Row homes. New Japanese maple trees — and perhaps cherry trees and magnolias — will be planted in a nod to the heritage of the row before its Japanese-American residents were ousted and interned during World War II.

"We're stabilizing the park and updating the landscaping," said Steve Cismowski,

the manager from Rec & Park responsible for Cottage Row. "Those redwoods were always the wrong species for a park this size. We caught it just in the nick of time."

He said the interim plan — what he called "shoestring and duct tape landscaping" — will make the park safer and more usable. "But it isn't intended to be the end of the conversation — just the beginning."

Cismowski and his crew expect to work in the park every Monday for the next six weeks, completing their limited work by mid-May. They are widening the planters where the redwoods stood, building new steps and adding Japonesque touches. The eucalyptus stump — too big to grind out — will remain.

While Cottage Row has lost its redwoods, it has gained its own song — a lyrical melody by singer-songwriter Eve Fleishman, who lives nearby.

"Twice a week I could sing to the five small redwood trees that inspired the bridge lyrics of my song, *City Light*," she said. "I felt like crying when I saw they were gone. Not much to sing about on Cottage Row right now."

 [newfillmore.com](http://newfillmore.com) | A song for Cottage Row

### THE NEW FILLMORE

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#### Connecting the neighborhood

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 [newfillmore.com](http://newfillmore.com) | updates, videos and an archive of back issues

■ STREET TALK

**Elite Cafe is getting jazzier**

The Elite Cafe — an institution on Fillmore Street for more than 30 years — is showing signs of new life. Already onboard with plans for a new menu this month is executive chef James London, who spent his childhood in Charleston, S.C., before moving to prominent kitchens in New York. Elite owner Peter Snyderman



has also applied for a limited live performance permit that will allow small jazz combos, which will perform two nights a week.

■ **COOL YOGA IN A NEW SPACE:** The venerable Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco has just made the move from its longtime space in the Sunset to the neighborhood, putting down roots at 2201 Sutter at Pierce. On April 12 and 13, the Institute is holding a celebratory open house complete with free food, music, henna and an array of hour-long classes at reduced prices. For more information, go to [iyisf.org](http://iyisf.org).

■ **HERE COMES THE RABBIT:** Just in time for Easter, the women's boutique Roberta Freymann at 2055 Fillmore has taken on a new persona as Roberta Roller Rabbit. The newly renovated shop offers children's clothing and accessories, including baby blankets, pajamas and toys.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

**Fillmore Center Not Going Condo**

**E**NDING A LONG legal battle, a San Francisco Superior Court judge on March 4 blocked the owners of the Fillmore Center from converting its 1,113 apartments into condominiums — which ensures the units will remain rentals, with more than 200 of them reserved for low-income residents through 2017.

The Fillmore Center, a residential and commercial complex spanning four city blocks along Fillmore, Steiner, Turk and O'Farrell, was completed in 1991 on land then owned by the Redevelopment Agency.

The ruling spotlights the neighborhood's storied and sometimes painful past, when redevelopment was reviled by many for razing existing homes and businesses in the area, with the promise of replacing and modernizing them. In the mid 1960s, a plan for the Western Addition was finalized that aimed to "eliminate blight" and stimulate housing for residents of various ages and incomes.

But political ploys and mismanagement stalled and sometimes sabotaged the efforts.

In 1985, developers proposed building the Fillmore Center and cut a deal with the Redevelopment Agency: 20 percent of the units would stay below market rate until 2017 — and in exchange, the developers would get "advantageous financing terms."

But the original developers went bankrupt in 1991, funding the final construction of the Fillmore Center that year with money raised by leasing the units already completed.

By that time, the San Francisco Board



The 1,113 units in the Fillmore Center will remain rentals, with more than 200 reserved for low-income residents.

of Supervisors had enacted an ordinance forbidding converting rentals to condos in buildings with more than six units and capping annual conversions at 200 units.

The Fillmore Center property changed ownership over the years and the ban on condo conversion did not sit well with Fillmore Center Associates, a newly minted corporation that took over in 2004. In 2008, the new owners filed two lawsuits seeking to establish the right to convert the rental units and sell them as condominiums.

In 2012, another superior court ruling held that Fillmore Center Associates must comply with the city's condo conversion ordinance. It said the owners were not immune from the ordinance preventing conversion because they were seeking "private economic gain in the marketplace"

as opposed to "furthering a governmental activity."

Last month's decision rejected the owners' claim that they could somehow resurrect prior rights to convert the housing units, with the court emphasizing that previous owners had failed to complete and file the paperwork that could have preserved those rights.

City Attorney Dennis Herrera, charged with representing the city's interests, hailed last month's decision.

"This is a major legal victory that protects affordable housing at a time when San Francisco desperately needs it," he said. "The displacement of Western Addition tenants from more than 1,100 apartments in the midst of the current housing crisis would have been unthinkable."

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Sunday Masses

Saturday Evening: 5:30 pm (Vigil), 7:30 am (Quiet), 9:30 am (Family)

11:30 am (Solemn), 1:30 pm (St. Jude Pilgrim Mass in Spanish)

5:30 pm (Contemporary Music)

9:00 pm (Music by candlelight)



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**HOLY WEEK**

**Friday, April 4**

Soup, Supper & Speaker,

6:15-7:30 pm, Parish Hall

Stations of the Cross with organ meditations  
7:30 pm, Nave

**Wednesday, April 9**

Twilight Retreat with Confessions

12:00-1:00 pm & 7:30-9:00 pm, Lady Chapel

**Friday, April 11**

Passion Play, 7:30 pm, Nave

**Palm Sunday, April 13**

5:30 pm Vigil Mass (Saturday, April 12)

7:30 am Quiet Mass

9:30 am Family Mass

11:30 am Solemn Choral Mass

1:30 pm St. Jude Pilgrim Mass in Spanish

5:30 pm Mass with Contemporary music

9:00 pm Mass by candlelight

**THE SACRED TRIDUUM**

**Holy Thursday, April 17**

Tenebrae 7:30 am; Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:30 pm

**Good Friday, April 18**

Tenebrae 7:30 am

Seven Last Words of Christ 12:00 pm

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord 1:45 pm

(A simple version with read Passion Gospel)

Confessions 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Stations of the Cross (especially for families) 5:00 pm

The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord 7:30 pm

(A solemn version with read Passion Gospel)

**Holy Saturday, April 19**

Tenebrae 8:00 am; The Easter Vigil 8:30 pm

**No confessions this day**

**Easter Sunday, April 20**

Mass with Easter Hymns 7:30 am

Family Mass 9:30 am

Solemn Choral Mass 11:30 am

St. Jude Pilgrim Mass in Spanish 1:30 pm

Mass with Contemporary Music 5:30 pm

Mass by Candlelight 9:00 pm

**No confessions this day**

[www.stdominics.org](http://www.stdominics.org)

## CRIME WATCH

### **Attempted Burglary Divisadero and Pine Streets March 1, 5:23 a.m.**

Officers responding to a call concerning two men attempting to break into a business found one man there stationed on the sidewalk, looking north and south on Divisadero. The second man was tampering with the front door. The man serving as look-out alerted his companion to the officers' arrival and the two began briskly walking away. Officers detained them and discovered they possessed numerous burglary tools — including a crowbar, vise grips and screwdrivers; they also had methamphetamine. A wood chisel was stuck in the door jamb next to the deadbolt. Both suspects were charged with attempted burglary, a narcotics violation and possession of burglary tools.

### **Road Rage, Weapons Violations Pine and Scott Streets March 3, 4:50 p.m.**

A motorist told police that while he was stopped at the intersection of Pine and Scott, another driver who had become angry with him threw a heavy object at his car. The caller then followed the suspect's vehicle, and officers located and detained him. While searching the suspect's car, they found a billy club, a BB gun, a crossbow, a taser, pepper spray and an axe. He was charged with weapons violations.

### **Burglary Washington and Broderick Streets March 8, 11 a.m.**

A witness saw a man with a cart lingering in front of a neighbor's open garage door who then quickly walked away, tossing a blue folding chair from the cart as he fled. A second neighbor followed the man

and called 911. Officers detained the suspect at Sacramento and Divisadero.

A woman then told the officers she had been inside her home when she heard knocking sounds coming from her garage. She opened an interior door and saw her garage door was open and her blue chair was out on the sidewalk. The man's cart also contained a tennis racket that belonged to her along with numerous items believed to have been taken from other homes. The suspect was charged with burglary and possession of burglary tools.

### **Robbery Geary Boulevard and Divisadero Street March 10, 6:30 p.m.**

A woman was on a westbound Geary bus. When it stopped at Divisadero, a man grabbed her phone and jumped off. The woman gave chase, screaming as she ran. A passerby called 911 and provided police with a description of the suspect. When the fleeing man and his pursuer got to Broderick and Garden, the robber suddenly stopped, announcing he had a gun and threatening to hurt her if she didn't stop shouting.

The woman begged him to give her back her phone. The suspect then said she would have to pay him for it. They walked to a nearby ATM, where she withdrew money and handed it to the suspect just as police arrived. The suspect told the officers it was a "domestic dispute," but the woman said she did not know the man and that he had just robbed her on the bus. The suspect was charged with robbery and extortion.

### **Robbery with Force Post and Laguna Streets March 10, 5:10 p.m.**

A pedestrian stopped to wait for a

green light when a man approached her from behind and said, "I like your hair. Where do you get it done?" She responded, "Thank you," and walked on, crossing the street.

But the man clung close beside her and she began to feel uncomfortable. After three blocks he became agitated because she wouldn't talk to him.

Finally she turned on him and said, "Leave me alone. I'm taking a picture of you." She took out her phone but before she could unlock it, he snatched it from her and ran. She chased after him, shouting, "Help me — he's stealing my phone," and managed to grasp his backpack in an effort to stop him. Several men nearby ran over and tried to help; one called the police.

When the officers arrived, the assisting citizens were holding the robber down; one of the men had been bitten on his right bicep and punched in the face. The police subdued the suspect after a short struggle and booked him at Northern Station.

### **Robbery Sutter and Broderick Streets March 10, between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m.**

A suspect entered an apartment and removed jewelry, three laptops, a desktop computer and two TVs with game consoles. There was no sign of forced entry. The tenant stated he had lost his keys several days earlier. Police have no suspects at this time.

### **Burglary, Unlawful Entry, Possession of Stolen Property Sutter and Fillmore Streets March 11, 6:15 a.m.**

A woman told police she had heard noises coming from her garage. She then

saw a man inside filling duffel bags with her property. As officers arrived, a man carrying two heavy duffel bags ran into the police while attempting to flee. The officers detained him. A computer check revealed the suspect was on probation for another burglary in the city. He was booked at Northern Station.

### **Attempted Burglary Post and Steiner Streets March 20, 5:20 a.m.**

Officers received a call concerning a man breaking into a garage. The caller provided a good description of the suspect, and officers found him walking along Sutter Street. When approached, he stated, "I was just trying to get into the garage to get my car." However he also stated that he did not live there, and he was carrying a wrench and a chisel. Officers searched him and found a credit card belonging to someone else. The suspect was charged with attempted burglary, possession of burglary tools and a stolen credit card.

### **Fraud Geary Boulevard and Fillmore Street March 26, 3 p.m.**

A business owner received a call from a man who said he was from PG&E. The caller told him his account was past due for more than \$1,400. He then stated that unless payment in the form of a Green Dot MoneyPak Card was received within the next 40 minutes, the business owner's power would be turned off. The owner was suspicious, but sent his wife to purchase the card while he attempted to contact PG&E, which eventually confirmed that his account was fine and that he had likely been scammed. Police have no suspects at this time.



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# She's Got a Passion for Fashion

Fillmore's newest boutique is an independent run by a native

**E**VELYN SANDERS-HAYE is one of those rarities: She was born and raised in San Francisco. She still has strong memories of frequenting the neighborhood with her father when she was a child.

"I remember the way Fillmore used to be," she says. "I remember the shops, the barbeque and the ice cream — and, to be honest, the prostitutes. I remember my father pointing to them and saying, 'Don't you grow up and be like them.'"

Now she looks around A City Obsession, the fashion boutique she opened on March 23 at 1820 Fillmore, and beams: "I can just hear my father say, 'You made me proud.'"

Sanders-Haye describes her brand as moderately priced; a line of blouses begins at about \$100.

Before securing the space on Fillmore occupied in recent years by the handbag store Muse Ten, she says the landlord grilled her about what distinguished her shop from the burgeoning number of high-end women's boutiques that have flooded the street in recent years. Her response: "I don't sell \$700 shirts."

Sanders-Haye says most of her clients are age 30 and older. "They're women who absolutely do not need clothes, but are looking for an artistically different or special piece to add to their wardrobes," she says. "They want clothes that are mature, but sexy."

The small shop is stocked with a range of sizes from XS to 3X.

And she has given much thought to her boutique's slogan: Go Out, Be Seen, Turn Heads, Have Fun!

"Too many women wear the same thing over and over — and always reach for black, gray or blue," she notes. "But I say, don't be afraid to have the confidence to turn heads, to have different clothes for different occasions. And it's okay to be racy one day, conservative the next."

Sanders-Haye left San Francisco to attend school in Syracuse, New York, completing undergrad and graduate degrees in political science. But she scrapped plans to become a lawyer when she saw how little her lawyer friends were earning and worked instead in various capacities for then-emerging giants such as Texas Instruments and Hewlett-Packard.

On the job, Sanders-Haye says she suffered the "double whammy" of being a woman and a woman of color while working in the tech industry. But those years also provided the backdrop for a vital life lesson and the birthplace of her pluck.

"This guy who was my customer said to me,

'All of my sales reps have been men — and now I have *you*,'" she recalls. "I looked him in the eye and said, 'That's right. And I'm not going to have a sex change operation,'" she recalls. "He didn't see that I was so mad and upset that I just got into my car and cried," she says. "But it changed our dynamic at once — and instilled confidence in me."

In time, the initial lure of the tech industry lost its luster.

"High tech is such a left brain activity," she says. "And the clothes I had to wear — those suits, those high necks, those little bowties on the blouses. After 20 years, I just thought, 'Forget that!' I began to scheme in my head at night about returning to California, setting up a boutique, traveling all over and finding great fashions to offer."

For Sanders-Haye, fashion was a passion early on. "My mother was a seamstress, and my elder sister could duplicate anything she saw in a magazine," she says. "When I was growing up, there were five of us in the family. If you wanted clothes, you had to make them. I sewed my own."

Another experience helped point the way for Sanders-Haye: In 2000, while visiting her youngest sister who was living in Ghana, she was smitten by the beautiful colors and fabrics she saw there — and further inspired to design, find and offer women more interesting clothes to wear to work.

Sanders-Haye returned to San Francisco seven years ago. She opened her first retail shop in the heart of Oakland's thronging City Center two Octobers ago — "right in the middle of the depression," she says.

But she quickly garnered a following of loyal customers drawn to the bright colors and flowing fabrics that were hallmarks of the fashions she offered. And last month, many of them descended with cultlike devotion when she opened her second A City Obsession boutique on Fillmore.

"That'd be perfect for wine tasting in Sonoma," she tells one woman, who is eyeing a blue floral tunic. "I want you to pair this with a pencil skirt," she advises another, while wrapping up a new purchase: a crisp blouse with asymmetrical hemline.

The decor in the shop is still a work in progress. A desk was sent back because it didn't meet Sanders-Haye's exacting standards. And though the walls are adorned with scenes from New York and Massachusetts — cities she has known and loved which planted the idea for the shop's name — one wall in the corner is still blank.

"I'm saving that space for San Francisco," she says.

## What's different?

"I don't sell \$700 shirts."

— EVELYN SANDERS-HAYE  
owner of A City Obsession



"Too many women wear the same thing over and over," says Evelyn Sanders-Haye (below), whose new boutique is located at 1820 Fillmore.



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# A Kinder Cut

Local hair salon offers homeless families help and hope

By BARBARA KATE REPA

ON A SUNNY afternoon in late March, Christine Coppola pulled up to the Compass Family Shelter on Polk Street and opened the trunk of her car to unload an unlikely stash: a collection of combs, brushes, blow dryers, towels and hair potions and products.

Coppola has worked at Renaissance Salon, a block off Fillmore at 2600 Sacramento Street, for 19 years — and owned it for the last 15. For several months now, she has been leading a group of hair stylists who deliver the gift of grooming to the families living temporarily at the shelter.

Within moments of arriving at the shelter, she and two other stylists at Renaissance — Sara Nowacky and Josh McGill — transformed a basement area just off a communal kitchen into a makeshift salon.

“It’s a little difficult not having the right chairs and all, but we make do,” Coppola explained cheerfully.

Her first haircutting session at the shelter was last September and she has returned every eight weeks or so since then, enlisting a group of hairdresser friends from Renaissance and elsewhere. Shelter residents sign up for a styling session in advance; there are usually 10 to 20 clients.



Coppola divined the idea after a friend asked her to volunteer as a babysitter at the shelter so the parents could get a break. That friend was Heidi Sabelhaus, owner of three women’s boutiques on Fillmore, who has volunteered at Compass for several years and spearheaded the babysitting service.

While lending her hands and heart to babysitting, Coppola noticed that many of the children had unkempt and tangled hair. So she organized the makeshift salon.

“It’s nice to be able to give something to others,” she said. “And it seems like haircuts can often make people feel better about themselves. It’s especially important for the kids, I think. They’re innocent bystanders in life —

and if they go to school, it’s really important for them to feel good about how they look — not to get singled out by the other kids.”

During the visit in March, a little boy in bibtops waited his turn serenely in a high chair as his nervous dad supervised and fidgeted. “He’s only 15 months old,” the dad explained, “and it’s his first haircut.” A toddler getting a trim in the next chair began to squirm and cry, then managed a smile when he saw the final results in a hand-held mirror.

The adult clients were mostly serious and quiet; the sessions lack the usual gossip and chatter that so often flows between the stylist and the styled. One woman specified

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*“It’s his first haircut.”*

Some of the parents were more nervous than their kids — but not all — when Christine Coppola and her fellow stylists paid their latest visit to the Compass Family Center.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSIE BIEHLER



she wanted to keep her long locks all one length; another asked for “just a trim” to her layered brown hair — all the while beaming at her young son in the chair next to her, whose hair was being transformed from an unruly mop into a short boyish ‘do.

While she’s had some repeat clients at Compass, Coppola said it is difficult to forge relationships because residence at the shelter is a temporary.

“It’s not what I expected it would be,” Coppola said of the shelter’s styling sessions. “I thought I’d just go in and cut kids’ bangs. But some of the women here haven’t had their hair cut in a very long time. With the women, you can immediately tell they feel better with a haircut.

And if we can take care of their kids, too, it’s icing on the cake.”

Bianca Espinoza, a Renaissance client, works at the Compass shelter as a bilingual housing specialist helping find permanent housing for families in crisis. Compass Family Shelter provides 22 rooms of temporary shelter for families, she said. They can stay for up to six months, during which time they also get help with job training, placement and advocacy to help secure benefits and future housing — in addition to onsite child care, yoga, knitting and offsite field trips. There’s a waiting list of more than 200 families for the city’s three remaining public shelters, Espinoza said.

Coppola hopes to keep the momentum of the haircutting program going and perhaps even expand it to include more shelters.

“I’d also like to inspire more hairdressers to get involved — to do something outside their usual jobs,” she said. “This work can really open your eyes to someone else’s reality. And you never know: Some of the shelter residents may even be inspired to become stylists.”

*Those interested in volunteering with the haircutting project can contact Christine Coppola at [renaissancesalon@renaissancesalon.com](mailto:renaissancesalon@renaissancesalon.com). For more information on the Compass Family Shelter, go to [compass-sf.org](http://compass-sf.org).*

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# The Buzz on Divis

► FROM PAGE ONE

On the southeast corner, Tortilla Heights owner Paul Owens is reportedly dancing with three potential buyers, despite signs trumpeting a new chef and colorful new promotional flags. One of those said to be eyeing the popular Cabo San Lucas-inspired cantina is Ezra Berman, co-owner of the funky but hip Corner Store restaurant and bar at Geary and Masonic.

On the northeast corner, building owners Moe and Sharon Tabar — also proprietors of the ground-floor Divisadero Florist for the past 32 years — are facing a city order to retrofit the building to withstand a major earthquake. The building also houses six flats upstairs and the always-jammed Godzilla Sushi on the corner. Godzilla's head chef David Gong recently bought the three-decade-old sushi parlor — home of the Tinky Winky roll — and has designs on expanding.

**RETAIL BROKERS AND INVESTORS** say Divisadero Street is too folksy and perhaps a bit too seedy to woo the moneyed corporate labels that have turned upper Fillmore Street into a fashion mecca. For Divisadero, brokers are targeting neighborhood-serving tenants like the ones already there — Artistic Nails, Joe Freund's State Farm Insurance office, Mr. and Mrs. Kim's

Sunshine Express Cleaners, the Lucky Seven Smoke Shop and small eateries including Ocean Taqueria and the Cheese Steak Shop, which just re-upped its lease.

Yet despite its small-time storefronts and a heavy concentration of medical offices surrounding UCSF Medical Center at Mt. Zion, the four blocks of Divisadero between Geary and California are beginning to cash in on the cachet that started on the stretch of the street south of Geary a decade ago when Laurence Jossel, former chef at Chez Nous on Fillmore, opened the

buzz and foot traffic for the area is the highly praised B. Patisserie, which took over the space occupied by breakfast spot Crepe and Coffee. On the high-profile corner of California and Divisadero, Wild Hare has proven even more popular than Solstice, which it replaced. A block south, newcomer Presidio Pizza Company, which took over the corner spot at Pine Street long occupied by Frankie's Bohemian Cafe, has been packing in customers from opening to late-night closing.

Rents are going up, leading to concerns

*"The Divisadero corridor doesn't have the pedestrian traffic Fillmore has, but it's starting to grow."*

— CHARLIE CASTRO  
real estate agent with Pacific Union

celebrated Nopa restaurant and gave the neighborhood its name.

"The Divisadero corridor doesn't have the pedestrian traffic Fillmore has, but it's starting to grow," says Charlie Castro, a residential real estate agent for Pacific Union who helped put together the partnership that developed the condo and commercial project known as The Heights on California Street near Divisadero.

Already on that block and generating

among some existing small businesses and the departure of a few longtime tenants.

The fears were fanned by rumors that the Schmidt family from the Peninsula has drastically increased the rent on their building at 1807 Divisadero, next door to the King of Falafel, from \$2,500 to \$10,000. Longtime ground floor tenant Wee Scotty is currently having a moving sale, and the fate of DanceGround Keriac Dance Studio upstairs is in limbo.

But Ken Brownell, a leasing broker with TRI Commercial who represents the Schmidt family, says there's nothing sinister about a rent increase for a storefront that has been below market for years. He says the patriarch passed away and his children felt the rent should be raised from under \$1 a square foot, which their dad had levied for years, to \$3.33 a foot — or just under \$8,000 a month. Brownell expects the space will lease to a "neighborhood serving" merchant and says interest in the storefront is strong.

**STILL, A LOW-PROFILE LENDER** to many real estate investors sees plenty of signs that Divisadero isn't about to reinvent itself entirely. "The street is staying mom and pop," he says. "You've only got one, maybe two, national credit tenants — a Starbucks and an H&R Block. You could have had a national chain tenant move into the space at California and Divisadero when Solstice left, but it didn't happen — and that's a very prominent corner."

It's no surprise that some Divisadero merchants don't want to see the street too spiffed up.

"Everyone thought we were the arm-pit of the neighborhood because we're at Bush and not on Fillmore or Sacramento," says Sharon Chan, co-owner of Divisadero Florist. "But we've been here 30 years and handle the flowers for much of Pacific Heights — residents, society events, even celebrities. We did flowers for Ted Danson when he was dating Whoopi Goldberg. We're just a secret here and we like it that way."



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## A Boom in Condos Helps Spark Upper Divis

Success of The Heights sets the stage for a much bigger project

**A**NOTHER SWEEPING CHANGE on upper Divisadero is the addition of more residential housing.

One condo project, The Heights, has already sold out. Its 13 contemporary condominiums are blended into the block of shops and eateries on California Street and then wrapped around so that they also face Divisadero. Last year, sales of the two and three bedroom homes with 1,300 to 2,000 square feet ranged from \$1.25 million to \$1.8 million.

But what makes this a standout example of mixing modern urban housing in with a strip of Victorian buildings and nondescript storefronts is its genesis: A San Francisco real estate broker, not a deep-pocketed



Work is underway on the corner where megabuilder KB Home is putting 81 new condos.

developer, dreamed it up, designed it, fought for it, built it and sold it.

What's more, Charlie Castro, who sells homes for Pacific Union and who cobbled together the partnership that developed The Heights, had the foresight to include three commercial condominiums — allowed under the zoning laws — in the project.

As a result, the proprietors of a new vegan restaurant opening on Divisadero later this year paid The Heights \$300,000 to buy their 800 square foot space and will not have to worry about a landlord jacking up the rent or selling the building. With their own skin in the game, they can amass equity and benefit from property appre-

ciation — if the neighborhood's popularity continues to grow.

Castro sold the commercial condo on the California Street side of the project to nearby neighbor Tataki Sushi, a hotspot that always has a line outside its door. For \$850,000, Tataki got a 2,300 square foot space that will allow the restaurant and sushi bar to quadruple in size when it moves a few doors down the block later this year.

**STRONG DEMAND FOR CONDOS** — sales were up nearly 22 percent in the neighborhood last year — has to be good news for KB Home's venture at 2655 Bush on the corner of Divisadero.

In August 2012, Mill Valley-based Thompson/Dorfman Partners, which describes itself as "urban residential development" specialists, picked up the financially distressed property for a bargain \$14.5 million.

"There are several major employers in the area. This includes UCSF and Kaiser Permanente. The walkability of this location would be off the charts," Bruce Dorfman, a principal in the firm, recently told The Registry, a real estate news website.

But when a real estate broker told Dorfman and his partners they could make nearly a 250 percent profit on the corner in 18 months by selling out to major international player KB Home — the old Kaufman & Broad — they leaped at the deal.

KB Home has a cost of \$469,000 per condo, but representatives will not discuss details of the living units. Several developers and brokers say condos at the low end are fetching \$1,000 a square foot today, which could lead to a \$1 million price tag — at least.

Although mum on details of the condos, the developer is actively hunting for a tenant for its 3,800 square foot ground floor retail space.

"We're in discussions with multiple financial institutions as well as restaurants and we're open to proposals from any interested parties regarding neighborhood-serving retail," says Chris Homs, associate vice president of Terranomics Retail Services.

— CHRIS BARNETT

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By KELLY E. CARTER

I DIDN'T HAVE to venture far to gain inspiration to write *The Dog Lover's Guide to Travel*, which is being published this month by National Geographic. Every time Lucy, my longhair Chihuahua, and I walk out the front door of our Art Deco building in Pacific Heights, we step into pooch paradise.

There's a jar of dog treats on the floor, right at eye level for four-legged visitors, at Heidi Says Collections. There are water bowls for perambulating pooches near the entrances of many businesses along Fillmore Street. There's a collection of canines romping off-leash at Alta Plaza and Lafayette parks. There are hounds curled up at their humans' feet at Chouquet's, the Elite Cafe, Delfina, Tully's, Peet's and other establishments that offer *al fresco* seating.

Neighborhood institutions such as Bond Cleaners — where owner Phil Kaplan always had a treat for Lucy — Mrs. Dewson's Hats and Fillmore Hardware are no more. But dogs are here to stay.

I moved into the neighborhood, joining my beau, less than two years ago. Since



Kelly Carter and her pooch Lucy stop to shop and snack at Heidi Says on Fillmore Street.

Here, no one scolds me for dropping a tightly knotted bag of poop in their outside trash receptacle as they sometimes did in Positano. People just appreciate when you do the right thing and pick up.

Taking Lucy on leash into Pacific Heights Cleaners, where the staff doles out dog treats; next door to Juicy News, where a gumball-like dispenser full of doggy bones sits outside the door; and in the boutiques along Fillmore Street means I can run most errands while she gets her walk. George, with its offerings for posh pooches, and Barry's for Pets provide an array of retail options while Russian Hill Grooming Express keeps canines clean.

And having a respected animal hospital and shelter, the Pacific Heights campus of the SF SPCA, which recently merged with Pets Unlimited, adds to the neighborhood's pet appeal. It's nearly impossible to walk by the massive building without getting caught up looking at the pictures of the adorable faces of the pets available for adoption taped to the windows. I'm one of the shelter's dog walker volunteers. Since my Lucy moves at a snail's pace, those duties allow me to get some real exercise and afford a couple of more hours a week to mix and mingle with fellow pet parents in the neighborhood.

Kelly Carter's new book, *The Dog Lover's Guide to Travel*, featuring 75 destinations in the U.S. and Canada to vacation with a dog, is available at *Browser Books* at 2195 Fillmore Street.



## Travels With Lucy

A local writer's new book started close to home

then, Lucy and I have gotten to know many of the pooches of Pacific Heights, including Sophie the Yorkie, Corey the Pomeranian mix, Henry the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Sophie the Havanese, Tammy II the Welsh terrier and Bella the Sheltie.

Neighbors who know I'm a pet travel writer have stopped to ask my opinion on the most luxe dog-friendly hotels in downtown Los Angeles, advice on taking a dog to St. Barth and thoughts on the Four Seasons Riviera Nayarit for dogs. I'm always happy to dispense advice and shared my knowledge gleaned from 12 years of trav-

eling with Lucy — some of which is also posted online at [TheJetSetPets.com](http://TheJetSetPets.com).

Fittingly, Lucy and I met in November 2001 at an airport. Since then, we've hoppedscotched from my native Los Angeles to Italy, where we enjoyed two years of *la dolce vita* in Florence and Positano; to New York, where we hustled and bustled for four years; and to Los Angeles again for two years before settling here.

Our travels throughout the U.S., Europe, Mexico, the Caribbean and Canada afforded a perspective on how this neighborhood stacks up in terms of doggishness.

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# Sing and Live Longer? New Study Aims to Find Out

By JUDY GODDESS

**M**ANY AGREE that choir music can be a joyful noise. And choir members often find singing fulfilling and fun. But a new study recently launched locally aims to uncover whether singing in a choir can actually help older adults have longer and healthier lives.

As part of the study, the 15-member Community of Voices choir gave a lively gospel performance on March 20 at the Western Addition Senior Center at Fillmore and Turk led by maestro Firname Curtis and his wife, Nola Curtis. Maestro Curtis, a renowned San Francisco Bay Area music legend, producer and author, has a background in classical music as well as jazz, gospel, R&B, funk, folk and country. Haruwn Wesley on upright bass and Larry Douglas on trumpet accompanied the choir at the concert.

"I know singing in the choir makes people happier," says the center's director, Robin Bill. "People who were quiet when they first came to our center in September are now stepping up. You can see the improvement in the choir from when they first met to now." The Western Addition choir previously performed at the City Hall celebration of Kwanzaa and at the Parc 55 hotel, and another performance is planned for the fall.

"We believe singing in a choir and other creative arts can promote healthy aging," says Julene Johnson, a UCSF professor and founder and director of the Community of Voices study. "We were looking for a way



Members of the Community of Voices choir sing at the Western Addition Senior Center.

*"I wanted to keep my memory alive. This helps me focus, particularly the memory work."*

— BEVERLY QUAN  
recent retiree and choir member

for older people to remain independent and engaged. We knew that to have an effect the activity had to be meaningful, engaging and challenging. The creative arts do that."

Other smaller and less rigorously designed studies have explored the

impact of singing in a choir, but this is the first large-scale look at the physical strength, balance, memory and moods of singers versus non-singers. Singing has already been shown to improve shortness of breath, which is experienced

by about a third of all older adults.

The current study is a collaboration between UCSF, the San Francisco Community Music Center and 12 senior centers throughout the city. It's funded by a \$1.9 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Study results will be released in 2017, but many participants are already singing the choir's praises.

"When I retired, everything started giving way. I thought maybe I shouldn't have retired," says Haines C. Morgan. "When I heard about the choir, I joined up and I'm feeling better. It gave me a chance to meet other people — and I can sing again." A retired executive chef and Fillmore resident, Haines, fittingly nicknamed "Happy," is an experienced singer and entertainer who performed R&B at clubs in the Fillmore during the '60s.

A veteran of the karaoke circuit, Miguel Garcia, agreed. "Music has always been a passion and an escape for me," he says. "This is a great opportunity."

Singing experience is not required for Community of Voices participants. The choirs are open to those 60 and older with an interest in singing, a willingness to complete three study interviews with UCSF staffers and the commitment to attend a year of weekly rehearsals and perform in three public concerts.

Choir member Al Rodriguez recalls being fortified by music as a youngster. "In the summertime in the Philippines, where I grew up, the boys would walk miles to serenade a girl," he says. "We'd each sing a

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The Western Addition choir performed in the rotunda of City Hall during the celebration of Kwanzaa in December. Another performance is planned for the fall.

song and then the girl would sing her own song to us. She'd also cook a meal for us. That was my singing experience before I joined this choir."

Rodriguez is new to gospel music. "I never heard this kind of music, but I like

it," he says. "And I like the choir. Everyone is friendly and cooperative, and I love to sing."

Beverly Quan, a recent retiree, was drawn to the choir as a learning experience. "I sang in school choirs decades ago, and

thought it was time to refresh this skill as an older adult," she says. "Also, I wanted to keep my memory alive. This helps me focus, particularly the memory work."

And for Quan, there's another benefit. "It's really special being able to share this

with an audience," she says, "being able to spread our happiness around."

For more information on the study, go to [communityofvoices.org](http://communityofvoices.org). To apply to be in the choir, contact Rachel Freyre at 476-5903.



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1918 Pine St	4	4.5	3	4640	0	2/26/2014	3,400,000	3,600,000
3352 Washington St	4	4.5	2	3338	5	2/19/2014	4,250,000	4,325,000
3030 Washington St	3	3.5	2	3890	0	3/5/2014	4,950,000	4,950,000
2746 Buchanan St	4	4.5	3		23	3/7/2014	5,495,000	5,495,000
100 Spruce St	7	4.5	2	5465	20	2/25/2014	7,995,000	7,600,000
2550 Green St	5	5	2	5888	79	2/21/2014	11,000,000	10,000,000

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1450 Post St #502	1	1	1	540	249	2/28/2014	115,000	115,000
1805 Fillmore St #205	1	1	1	610	7	3/13/2014	599,000	640,000
1800 Washington St #212	1	1	1	745	11	2/27/2014	699,000	775,000
2436 Jackson St #3	2	1	0	795	18	3/7/2014	695,000	780,600
1885 Jackson St #402	2	2	1	878	0	3/5/2014	850,000	850,000
3140 Clay St #2	2	1	1	1062	11	3/13/2014	795,000	1,010,000
2147 Greenwich St	2	1	1	1263	10	3/6/2014	949,000	1,100,000
3136 Scott St	2	1	1		10	2/25/2014	995,000	1,100,000
1501 Greenwich St #101	2	2	2	1048	13	3/13/2014	1,029,000	1,150,000
2128 Vallejo St #3	2	2	2	1595	0	2/19/2014	1,365,000	1,365,000
1733 Scott St #2	2	2.5	1	1488	9	3/7/2014	1,150,000	1,410,000
1865 California St #3	3	2	1	1510	7	3/14/2014	1,295,000	1,550,000
1859 Scott St	3	3	1	2586	14	3/5/2014	1,899,000	2,100,000
3233 Jackson St #1	3	3.5	1		7	3/10/2014	3,995,000	4,200,000

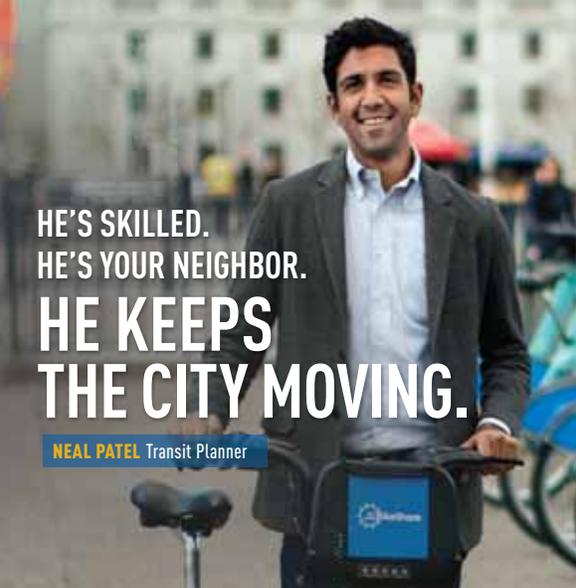
**Sales are fast but few**

The list of properties sold this month is surprisingly small — not because of a lack of buyers, but because of a lack of inventory. Entering the middle of the hot spring market, there has been an increase in much-needed inventory, but the number of homes available is still not meeting the demand. All but one of the 14 condos that sold last month were snapped up in 18 days or fewer at an average of 110 percent over asking. Gone are the days of long contingency periods and a few thousand extra dollars to sweeten the pot.

And the same holds true for single family homes, as three of the seven sales in the last month closed after less than a week on the market — at an average price of \$5.4 million.

Noteworthy: The inimitable manse at 2800 Pacific has gone into contract after 775 days on the market. It will be interesting to see the final sales price, as it first listed in July 2011 for \$12.5 million, then bounced up and then down to its current listing price of \$8.9 million.

— Data and commentary provided by MARIA MARCHETTI at Sotheby's International Realty. Contact her at maria@mariamarchetti.com or call 415/699-8008.



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# The Golden Years: Contemplating a Move

By HAZEL REITZ

**M**Y HUSBAND AND I lead active lives and are in pretty good health. But the years are marching on, and to our surprise we suddenly find ourselves in our 70s. A barrage of mail and phone calls pushing medical alert devices, walk-in bathtubs and lifetime care establishments underscores that sobering thought. While not eager to leave our comfortable home, the responsible thing seems to be to examine our options. So together with friends of a similar age, we recently embarked on a series of visits to local "life care communities."

Our first visit was in response to an invitation for tea and a tour of an expensive, elegant establishment in the neighborhood. We walked into a vast hotel-like lobby with acres of beautiful rugs and were promptly handed cups of tea. I did my best to juggle umbrella, shopping bag, purse and the beautiful china cup and saucer as we were ushered toward a deep sofa. But as I sank into its soft cushions, I watched in horror as my cup tilted, gave in to the force of gravity and fell to the floor, its contents spilling all over the gorgeous rug.

As the waiter and our guide mopped both me and the rug and swore that no damage had been done, I was sure I saw them exchange a knowing look that said: *Here's one who's more than ready for us.* As we sipped our tea and feasted on petit fours and strawberries dipped in chocolate, the staff briefed us on the benefits the establishment had to offer, stressing it was important not to delay our decision too long. The main criterion for admittance, in addition to a healthy bank account, is being in good enough health to live independently at move-in time. Assisted care followed by long-term and end-of-life care are available later if necessary.

Several residents — or "inmates," as one of our group referred to them — told us that making the move there was the best thing they had ever done. And they did seem to be a happy, interesting group: artists, writers, doctors, people who had traveled the world as had we.

We listened to the wonders available: comfortable apartments, a renowned dining room, beauty shop, gym, limousine service to the ballet and theater and opera, poetry readings, art lessons, cocktail parties and a myriad of other

activities. There was even a designated person to assist with the physical move, providing advice on what furniture and such to bring.

The assurance that we would be taken care of from the minute we decided to make the move until death was appealing. We could cast off all the worries and responsibilities of everyday life and simply enjoy whatever years remain.

The apartments were compact — either one bedroom or two — but well designed and comfortable and free to be decorated as desired. Art filled the walls of the corridors. The lounges, sunrooms, sheltered patio chaises and a well-stocked library with a fire all cried welcome.

*While not eager to leave our comfortable home, the responsible thing seems to be to examine our options.*

When I saw a small cat ambling around the hallway, I was ready to move in right away.

It was only after we had left all its glories behind that we questioned whether we were really prepared to give up our independence and invest all we had in buying the apartment — in reality an entrance fee — and paying thousands of dollars a month for all the services provided. Once committed, it would be financially prohibitive to change plans, certainly after the first year.

My very private husband was also deterred by living in such close proximity with so many others, and was particularly put off by a large bulletin board displaying photos of new arrivals. Another concern was living solely with people of our own age group. And so we pushed the idea of moving to the back of our minds — that is, until a recent trying week spent with plumbers and electricians following the demise of our water heater and some other electrical problems. Perhaps the time had come to let someone else take care of the endless nitty-gritties of life. We arranged to visit another establishment.

This one seemed more relaxed and less formal than the first, and we got the impression

the residents had a great deal of input into how it was run. The apartments we saw were spacious, with lots of light and wonderful views. There were also lovely terraced gardens — including one with individual plots for residents who wanted to grow their own flowers and vegetables, a dog park and a rooftop with a 360-degree view of San Francisco and the bay. While the apartments did not have full kitchens, communal kitchens were available and we were assured plans were afoot to put proper kitchens into some of the apartments.

Our guide led us around the dining room and the library — which included a special section of books written by residents — the gym, the rooms for games and meetings. People were doing puzzles, painting, exercising; a martini night was planned for that evening. Here, too, many services were provided, including a weekly mystery tour organized by the shuttle bus driver. But importantly for us, we got the sense that there was no pressure to participate in anything that didn't beckon. And we heard a wonderful story about a couple in their 90s who had dated each other when very young, found each other again in the residence and rekindled their romance.

As we left the building, we commented that everyone looked old. But then, so do we — though perhaps less so than the 103-year-old who has lived there for more than 30 years.

We have not yet decided whether one of these fine places will be our future home, but the pros are definitely more numerous than the cons: lovely accommodations, every meal cooked and served, complete care with onsite medical staff, activities galore, lots of companionship for bridge, art and exercise classes, organized outings, cocktail parties and every service imaginable.

The cons are few and harder to define, but there are enough of them to allow us to continue to procrastinate. The costs are high. And we would miss the diversity that makes up our current neighborhood. But perhaps our main reservation is not quite acknowledging that we may not be able to do everything for ourselves in the not so distant future.

As we consider and reconsider, we are justifying deferring any decision until we have explored a few more possible places to call home.

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Not many cities can boast a vibrant section of town that is upscale but approachable, fashionable but not elitist, comfortable without being boring. San Francisco's Fillmore is all these — and, best of all, it's not striving to be original. It just is. — *Gourmet magazine*

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