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# THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ AUGUST 2015

**A garden grows on Sutter**

Photograph by  
ROSE HODGES

After 22 years at their restaurant Woodward's Garden in the Mission, Margie Conard (left) and Dana Tommasino have brought their love of fresh California produce to the neighborhood — and found a rotisserie and antique chandelier to complete the package. Tommasino is the chef, and it turns out she's also something of a poet, as she reveals in the diary she kept as they prepared to open Gardenias at 1963 Sutter Street.

"PRELUDE IN BLUES" | PAGE 7

## City Owed \$18 Million for Yoshi's

Club, restaurant empty with no tenant in sight

IT HAS NOW cost more than \$18 million in city funds to build the Fillmore Heritage Center and keep it afloat.

There is no new tenant in sight for the huge empty spaces formerly occupied by Yoshi's jazz club and restaurant. The garage is losing \$10,000 a month now that the building has few visitors. The Lush Life gallery also sits empty and has no potential new tenants. The future of 1300 on Fillmore restaurant is in doubt.

These are some of the details that finally began to emerge last month about exactly what is happening with the project opened in 2007 to revitalize the stretch of Fillmore Street south of Geary once known as the Harlem of the West. Public hearings on July 13 and 27 brought out scores of restive neighbors, and a thick "informational memorandum" laid out the sad financial facts, complete with spreadsheets, term sheets, notices of default and lease terminations attached.

"What the answer is, I don't know," said Board of Supervisors President London Breed, who represents the area and presided over the public meetings. "Nothing is finalized. It's in the hands of the city."

Breed shot down rumors the space might be converted into a Whole Foods grocery, insisting it would be reborn as an arts-related operation.

The city took over the 50,000-square-foot ground floor commercial spaces on June 5 from developer Michael Johnson, who spearheaded the project. Johnson had taken over the club and restaurant on July 1, 2014, after Yoshi's declared bankruptcy. He rebranded it The Addition on November 1, the same time he stopped making his loan payments to the city. He shut down the club on January 14 of this year.

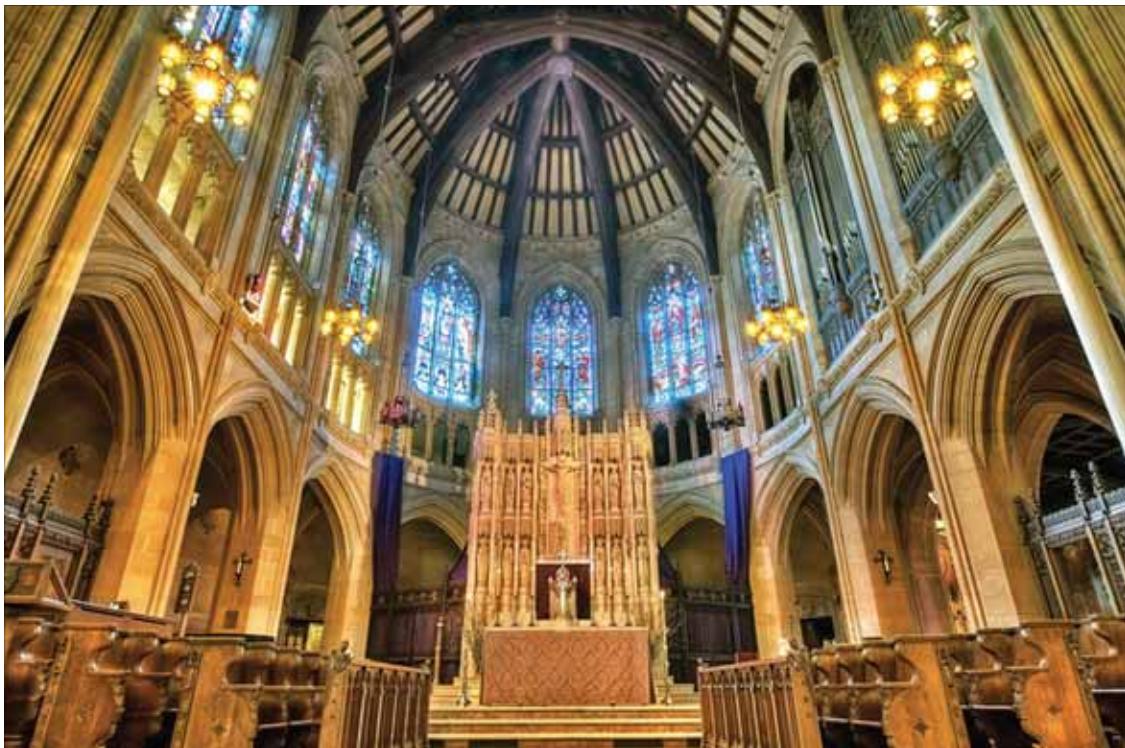
Since then, it has sat empty. Johnson now owes the city \$18,054 million, documents show.

Johnson has not spoken publicly about the situation and did not attend the meetings. But a "fact sheet" he prepared was distributed at the July 27 meeting. It said Johnson "has secured three potential new tenants," but been unable to negotiate a deal with the city.

"No new tenant has been selected," said Joaquin Torres of the mayor's office at the July 27 meeting. He said the city was developing a request for proposals and would hold another public meeting in September to present its plan.

Many local residents called for the city to give the building to the neighborhood as redress for historic injustices.

But Breed said that was unlikely. "The next establishment here needs to be a financially viable project," she said.



#### A grand tour of St. Dominic's

The docent program at St. Dominic's Church at Steiner and Bush is sponsoring "The Grand Tour: An Overview of Church Art & Architecture" on Saturday, August 22, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Docents will lead visitors on a tour of treasures

in wood, stone and stained glass inside and outside the church. The event — a "drop in and stay for as little or as much as you like" tour — is free and open to the public. For more information, call 415-517-5572, or email [ourlabs@mac.com](mailto:ourlabs@mac.com).

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**■ STREET TALK****Fillmore Beach takes a midsummer break**

Some locals are looking a little lost since PEET'S COFFEE closed on July 17 for a three-week sprucing-up. The last of upper Fillmore's coffee shops with outside seating, Peet's has a loyal following — especially in high summer, when the sun shines on the tables on the Sacramento Street side, an area known locally as Fillmore Beach.

One historic artifact has emerged: a sign (left) in the basement from Peet's longtime predecessor on that corner, SUGAR BROILER, which few people ever actually saw open.

**A WISE MOVE:** The LoMo is getting its own bagelry. WISE SONS BAGELS is turning 1520 Fillmore into a bakery that will produce up to 5,000 bagels daily, plus other Jewish delicacies, plus a 12-seat retail shop. . . . No definite word yet on the fate of the original BOULANGERIE on Pine Street, but all signs point to a return of founder Pascal Rigo. . . . Starbucks has cleared out its EVOLUTION FRESH shop at 2201 Fillmore, but won't say what's next, only that it's "in the process of decommissioning the space." Bring back the Hillcrest!

**NEW NEIGHBORS:** The casual Italian shoe brand SUPERGA got the green light from the Planning Commission for its new store at 2326 Fillmore. . . . The salon-spa SOCIAL BEAUTY is moving from Lombard to 1712 Fillmore, former home of Marcus Books and Bop City. It opens Aug. 11.

**NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS****JFK Towers Getting New Owners, Re-Do**

Nonprofit taking over public housing projects

**A**s part of the city's transfer of its public housing to private ownership, Mercy Housing — a nonprofit begun by the Sisters of Mercy and now sponsored by several orders of Catholic nuns — will take over and renovate four housing projects in the neighborhood.

Included is John F. Kennedy Towers, the crescent-shaped 12-story building at 2451 Sacramento Street, near Fillmore. Also being transferred and renovated are the public housing apartments at 2698 California and 1880 Pine, plus another on Arguello Boulevard.

Mercy Housing officials have already begun meeting with residents to lay out their plans for renovating the buildings.

■ The architect of JFK Towers also designed Candlestick Park. PAGES 13 & 14

This month they will hold a public meeting to discuss the transfer and renovation of JFK Towers. The meeting will be held on August 10 at 6 p.m. at Calvary Presbyterian Church at 2515 Fillmore.

"There's a lot of significant deferred maintenance," said Michael Kaplan, a developer with Mercy Housing who is responsible for 2451 Sacramento.

Kaplan, who lives in the neighborhood, said the building will get new elevators, security and mechanical upgrades and new flooring. The ground floor will be completely gutted and reconfigured and a new



Many of the apartments in JFK Towers offer sweeping views across the neighborhood.

community room will be added to the rear of the building. But the appearance of the building will not change.

"It's going to look exactly as it does now," Kaplan said.

The building has 98 units — 74 studios, 23 one-bedroom units and one two-bedroom apartment.

The renovation over the next two years will require that some tenants be relocated, which has led to fears among residents that they will be moved out of the neighborhood.

Kaplan said units have been kept empty to allow relocation within the building

in many cases, but he acknowledged that some residents may be relocated temporarily to other locations.

"But 90 percent will return to the same unit," he said, when the renovation is complete.

"The whole building will never be empty," said Mercy Housing vice president Amy Bayley, who is a member of the Sisters of Mercy.

Bayley said a Mercy Housing affiliate will also take over the management of the public housing units being renovated.

"We're looking at long-term ownership," she said.

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## CRIME WATCH

**Burglary of Vehicle**  
**Geary Boulevard and Gough Street**  
**May 15, 10:48 p.m.**

Officers on patrol heard a car alarm going off. As they approached, they saw the car's hazard lights flashing. A man was in the back seat, crouched on his hands and knees. Officers took him into custody. A computer check revealed he was not the registered owner of the vehicle. When they searched the suspect's pockets, they found a broken spark plug, a tool commonly used to break car windows. He was booked at county jail.

**Suspicious Occurrence**  
**Gough and Green Streets**  
**May 16, 8:15 p.m.**

A woman came into Northern Station to report that she had been walking her two dogs in Allyne Park when she realized one was eating a sandwich the animal had picked up from a park bench near a dumpster; it was filled with dozens of pills and tablets. She stopped her dog from eating the sandwich and took photos of the scene. She then took the dog to the SFSPCA hospital on Fillmore Street. The veterinarian determined the two medications in the sandwich were Lisinopril and Fenofibrate. The dog suffered an upset stomach but was released from the hospital the same day.

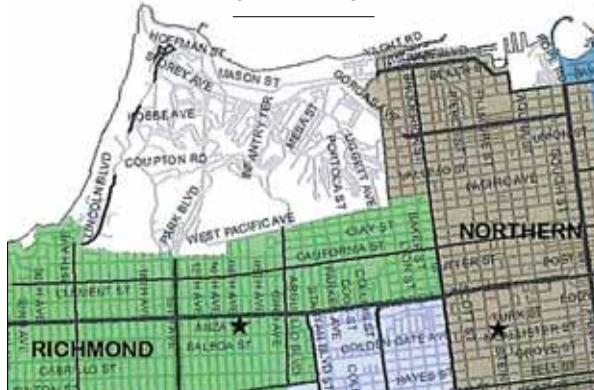
**Burglary**  
**Fillmore and Pine Streets**  
**May 29, 4:42 a.m.**

A man was exiting a cab when he noted the window of a nearby clothing store had been smashed, leaving glass all over the sidewalk. The store's front door had been pulled off its hinges. He called 911. When officers arrived, they saw several racks of clothing had been emptied; clothing and hangers were strewn over the floor and several display cases were missing items. They estimated the loss at roughly \$30,000.

The police viewed the store's video footage and saw a white GMC truck ramming the store's front entrance. Three individuals wearing hoodies and scarves then rushed into the store to gather armfuls of clothing and handbags. They jumped back into the truck and sped off eastbound on Sacramento Street. The officers gave the store owner a case number and instructions for following up with police inspectors.

**Aggravated Assault**  
**Van Ness Avenue and Sacramento Street**  
**June 28, 1:24 a.m.**

Officers received a call from dispatch concerning a group of men who were assaulting people at random. One man stated that he had been waiting at a bus stop when a group of men approached and punched him in the face. He suffered a laceration on his right temple.



Boundaries between police districts were adjusted on July 19, with the dividing line between Northern and Richmond districts moved west from Steiner to Divisadero.

As the officers were gathering information from him, another battery was reported at Van Ness and Washington. This man said he was walking down the street when he saw a group of men approaching. Suddenly, without provocation, one punched him in the right side of his face with a closed fist. The police broadcast a description of the suspects and responding officers found the suspects. Paramedics arrived to treat the injuries. One man wanted to press charges and signed a citizen's arrest form. The suspects were transported to Northern Station.

**Road Rage**  
**Divisadero and Eddy Streets**  
**July 2, 4:21 p.m.**

A man was crossing the street in the crosswalk when a car making a turn almost hit him. The pedestrian got into a heated argument with the driver of the car, who then followed the man to his own vehicle and rammed it, causing damage. The pedestrian called the police, who are still investigating the incident.

**Arson**  
**Bush and Buchanan Streets**  
**July 5, 11:32 p.m.**

A man saw an unknown individual place a rubber glove on the front door knob of a building and attempt to light the glove on fire. When the witness shouted at the man to stop, he ran. Roughly 45 minutes later, the witness was walking his dog and saw the same man standing at a bus stop. He was trying to set styrofoam on fire using a lighter and paper. The witness called the police and officers placed the suspect into custody.

**Aggravated Assault**  
**Van Ness Avenue and Green Street**  
**July 6, 8:55 p.m.**

A man and his girlfriend were taking

pictures in the hallway of their hotel when an unknown man walked up to the woman and threw a slice of pizza at her arm. The suspect then took off, running upstairs. The man chased him up the stairs, but as he turned the corner, the assailant was waiting for him and punched him in the head and face.

The man was able to get away and return to his room, where he called the police. He felt pain in his head, neck and jaw, so officers summoned an ambulance. The police then canvassed the area and located a video camera that showed the suspect entering one of the rooms in the hotel. They knocked on the door and a family member of the suspect opened it to admit the officers. There they found the suspect lying on the couch. The man who had been attacked positively identified the suspect as the person who threw the pizza and beat him up. He was transported to county jail for booking.

**Malicious Mischief**  
**California and Pierce Streets**  
**July 9, 1:32 a.m.**

**Bush and Webster Streets, 1:51 a.m.**

A man was inside his home when he overheard two men outside talking. One urged the other: "Do it, do it!" Then the witness heard glass breaking. When he looked out his window, he saw two men standing behind a car with a broken rear window. The two then ran down the street, where they continued to break out back windows of cars. The suspects were two white males wearing dark clothing. Both were carrying skateboards. They fled the scene before police arrived.

Nearby, a few minutes later, another man heard the sound of glass breaking and looked out his window to see two individuals smashing car windows with skateboards. He called 911. Several officers responded and found three vehicles with broken

windows. The witness gave the officers a description and officers located two men nearby who matched it. While conducting a booking search, an officer found broken glass inside one suspect's front jacket pocket. Both suspects were transported to county jail.

**Aggravated Assault**  
**Buchanan and Union Streets**  
**July 11, 1:52 a.m.**

Officers observed a large crowd gathering at the corner of Buchanan and Union Streets. Two men were arguing heatedly. One was punching the other in the face and head, causing him to fall to the ground. Officers broke up the fight and called for an ambulance; the man who had been struck was transported to San Francisco General. Officers transported the aggressor to Northern Station. He had blood on his shoes, which were booked into evidence. This man reported that he had come out of the bar to see his two nieces in an argument with the other man. He confronted the man and the argument quickly escalated. The assailant claimed he punched the other man in self defense. He was transported to county jail and booked.

**Forcible Entry**  
**Fillmore and Clay Streets**  
**July 16, 5:20 a.m.**

A man out walking saw an unknown individual smash in the window of Mehfil Indian Cuisine. He then reached inside, grabbed several bottles of alcohol and fled west on Clay Street, toward Alta Plaza Park.

The witness called the police. Officers found a shattered window and glass scattered all over the sidewalk. The witness said the suspect was a white male approximately 5'6" tall, weighing about 150 lbs, with a tattoo on his neck. He was wearing a brown hat, black shirt and baggy dark pants. Officers searched the area but could not find the suspect.

**Robbery With Force**  
**Post and Pierce Street**  
**July 17, 8 p.m.**

A woman was looking at her cell phone when someone pushed her from behind. When she turned to see who it was, a man grabbed the phone from her hand and ran. The woman attempted to chase the man but saw that he had joined a larger group of people. Fearing for her safety, she stopped and called the police. The officers located a witness who said he might know the suspect. They recovered the cell phone but were unable to locate the suspect. He was a black juvenile from 12 to 16 years old, about 5'4" tall and weighing roughly 110 lbs.

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## Marc Jacobs Goes Upscale on Fillmore

Couture collection moves over from Maiden Lane

**G**ONE ARE THE T-shirts, the cheeky slogans, the bins of Marc by Marc Jacobs tchotchkes — key chains, lipstick pens and colorful condoms packaged with the handwritten warning: "Remember — Safety First!" And it's unlikely the person dressed as a giant chick will make a nest in the window come next spring.

The offerings inside the shop on the corner of Fillmore and Sacramento have been suddenly downsized and upscale, the Marc by Marc Jacobs nameplate outside quietly replaced by lettering that says only Marc Jacobs. The higher-end Marc Jacobs boutique on Maiden Lane, near Union Square, has been closed and incorporated into the Fillmore shop.

But what may strike locals as yet another move upscale on the street has actually been long in the works in the international company's boardroom.

In 2013, Marc Jacobs stepped down as artistic director at Louis Vuitton, a post he held for 16 years, ostensibly to concentrate on his namesake line. At the same time, it was widely reported that the Marc Jacobs



A quick remodeling in mid-July gave the Marc Jacobs store a new name outside and a new look inside.

brand was preparing itself for an initial public offering. As part of the plan, the company recently stopped production of its Marc by Marc Jacobs label, regarded as the more affordable and sassy little sister of the brand, and announced it would close its free-standing Marc by Marc Jacobs stores.

The company's changes are being trumpeted in a number of ways. While Jacobs' past design inspirations allegedly came from grunge and musicals, the muse for his current fall collection is fashion icon and longtime *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland, noted for her understated sophistication. The face of his campaign this year is Cher, 69; last year, it was Miley Cyrus, 22.

At the Fillmore Street store, the new look is less cluttered, more curated. The shop now offers two lines.

A small but growing rack of the Marc Jacobs couture collection — with prices ranging from a \$695 blouse to a \$6,000 sequined gown showcased in the window — is stationed to the left of the entrance.

The other line, heavy on black and white this season, with a vibe one sales associate describes as "mod" — for the stylish girl who wants to mix up patterns and colors," takes up most of the shop's real estate. There is also a small selection of fragrances, shoes and jewelry, in addition to a generous offering of handbags

that are displayed throughout the store.

Marc Jacobs management in New York is remaining mum about why the decision was made to consolidate its lines in the neighborhood, rather than on Maiden Lane, near the other tony boutiques around Union Square. But store manager Joanna Kalonico, a neighborhood resident who formerly staffed the Maiden Lane boutique, verifies the Fillmore space has a different feel and the clientele has a different look.

"Fillmore has a lot of foot traffic — and it's very neighborly, with lots of friendly people," she says. "So that's a huge change."

I still collect art,  
but not as fast as I collect friends.



For a retiree, psychotherapist Dr. Lu Chaiken is pretty busy. She still sees clients. She attends seminars and parties at The Sequoias, goes to the opera and symphony, and dines with her many friends in the community. So what has Dr. Chaiken retired from? Cooking, cleaning and worrying about her future health care. If that sounds appealing, maybe it's time for you to get busy, too. Call Candiece at (415) 351-7900 to learn more.

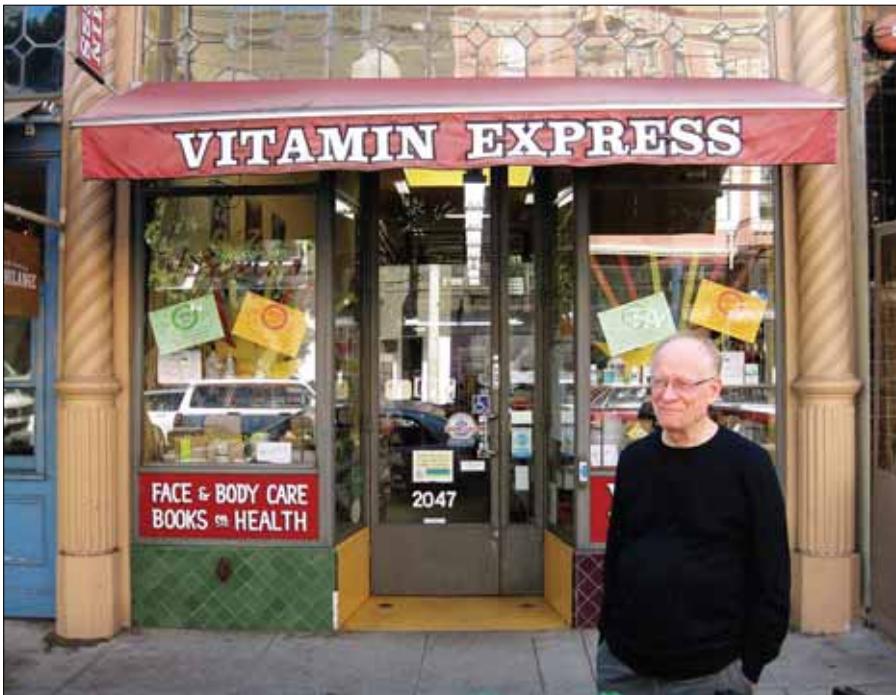
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Vitamin Express owner Michael LeVesque will close his store on Fillmore Street at the end of August, but the business will continue.

## Heading Home to the Sunset

After 15 years, Vitamin Express is closing its Fillmore store

**A**FTER 15 YEARS at 2047 Fillmore, Vitamin Express will be closing at the end of the month. Owner Michael LeVesque tells why.

### So you're leaving Fillmore Street?

Sad to say, we will be moving from Fillmore Street at the end of August. Fillmore has been a great street to be on and the people are fantastic. We'll miss being here. We have a large customer base that's as sad about our move as we are. The landlord has been good and helped us to stay another five years when rents began their steep incline. Our lease will soon be up. I am consolidating the stores into a single location at 1428 Irving Street — the original home of Vitamin Express.

I own the building on Irving Street and have an experienced permanent staff there as well. In the last few months four of our key staffers at the Fillmore store have moved away, all because they found

better living situations. It's unfortunate for our store and for our customers. Getting the special kind of staff we need and paying them enough to remain in the city is becoming prohibitive.

### How has the neighborhood responded to your business over the years?

The Fillmore is special. It has an energy that radiates a sophisticated vibrancy. Even before opening a store on Fillmore Street, Vitamin Express was advertising in the *New Fillmore* — a great neighborhood newspaper always worth reading. Back in the 1980s my favorite column was the excellent informative writing of Dr. Richard Kunin on health and nutrition. When the opportunity arose to open on Fillmore Street, I jumped at the chance.

These 15 years on Fillmore have been enjoyable beyond measure. The great variety and diversity of customers, the interactions with the medical community and the liveliness of the neighborhood

have made our business fully rewarding. We will miss it greatly.

### You've had stores and an online presence, right?

We are celebrating 33 years as a store — with five Bay Area locations at one time — and 19 years on the Internet at [vitaminexpress.com](http://vitaminexpress.com). We have access to the world's finest database on health and nutrition, combined with more than 40 years of nutritional experience, all joined together with the thousands of customers who teach us about the products we sell.

We continue to remain viable in San Francisco, but times change and we're in the age of disruption.

The disruption started when Internet sales became a free-for-all for pricing products. Making a low percentage of profit with high volume for an Internet sale naturally causes sales to flow to the Internet. Competition does not favor the high expenses necessary to run a store.

Then add convenience — not having

to leave your desk to make a purchase or get information, at whatever level of competency — and you have the perfect storm for reducing brick and mortar competition.

### What other changes have you seen?

The buying habits of people have changed dramatically toward gathering information from websites and ordering through them. That, plus the tremendous influence the pharmaceutical industry has through its massive advertising campaigns, colors the nutritional news and eliminates nutritional alternatives.

At the same time health supplement manufacturers are being bought by pharmaceutical companies, which immediately cut selection and availability to retailers like myself. And with the increase in the use of pharmaceuticals, we now have customers who are on 10 or 15 medications a day. With the use of herbs and nutritional supplements, it becomes an overwhelming task for them to be sure nothing counteracts with their medications.

### Where did you get your passion for vitamins and supplements?

Extraordinary things happen when you fill a deficiency. For sailors it was eating lemons and getting enough vitamin C to ward off scurvy on extended trips at sea. For me it was the dramatic relief from excruciating muscle pain in my legs after exercise due to polio as a young child. Having someone recommend the simple addition of calcium magnesium gluconate powder to orange juice was revealing in many ways. First was finding something that science said could and did work, second was doing it for myself and third was experiencing it working. Case after case, over and over again, nutrition makes the difference the body requires to gain health.

Vitamin Express makes a positive difference in people's lives. That's our reason to be.

### So you're closing the Fillmore store, but continuing the business?

It's back to our roots in the Sunset District by Golden Gate Park in what once was referred to as the uninhabitable area of San Francisco. Of course that changed, and now it's a vibrant and colorful part of the city. For many, San Francisco has become too expensive. But we own our building there and have a great staff. Vitamin Express may be leaving Fillmore Street, but we're still nearby.



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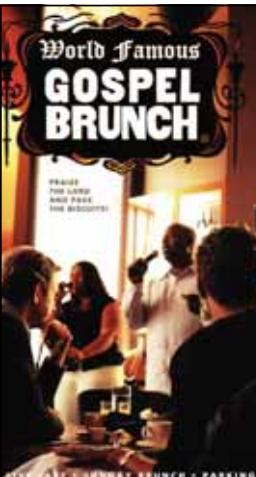
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Gardenias.

The first day we're officially in the place, I'm out on the street assessing our storefront. A smiling kid I don't know, maybe 15, from Winfred's, the longstanding hair salon next door, walks up quickly and asks: "You the new owners?" and, without losing stride, wide-arm hugs me congratulations.

My girlfriend Margie Conard and I had been looking for a space for years, then finally lost the lease to our restaurant, Woodward's Garden, which was funky diner under a freeway in the Mission when we bought it. There was no changing it for kids like us, just starting out and planning at the time to conjure a French-inspired dinner bistro. We rolled pain on and made do for 22 years.

The new space is by far the best thing we've ever come across. We name it Gardenias, swooping a little bit of our past Garden into our future.

Inevitably, every friend who walks into the new space begins to beam and says hushed, reverently, how perfect it all seems: location, size, back patio, kitchen, feel. I glow with it all, too; know what they mean. Know in my bones this is right. And part of me hopes to hell it's all true.

What will you do here? What's your concept? These modern, well-meaning questions.

Several friends whose eye I admire mention the Hague blue of nascent gardenias — a slate deep hue, grey-tinged almost. I call it up. It is without question a color ... bold, bottomless. It is for some reason also *the* color. The blue of the original bathroom tiles is aqua. We float gloss turquoise on the walls and ceilings above it, naturally. It is a scene.

I tweet: "My new restaurant, it turns out, is about all the blues & I can't help but think of Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*." Nelson's book is a remarkable series of connected essay fragments on the color: *Admit that you have stood in front of a little pile of powdered ultramarine pigment in a glass cup at a museum and felt a stinging desire. But to do what? Liberate it? Purchase it? Ingest it?*

What does blue have to do with Gardenias? How will it infuse us? And, of course, how not to think of blues in relation to the history of the great Fillmore District itself.

A friend stops by with a fancy, pungent smudge stick of blue-green sage, then tears up when she reminds us to "ask for what you want" as we walk around with it. (Which is, of course, the gift.)

A restaurant. In SF.

Our 14-year-old daughter walks into Gardenias for the first time and, after some taking-in, says: "I can't imagine how anyone could be anything but happy in this place, mama. It makes me so happy." Which is the true smudge.

This space was newly built-out four years ago and with obvious tenderness by

## Prelude in Blues

### Preparing to open Gardenias

BY DANA TOMMASINO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSE HODGES



the previous owners to become Roostertail. It is already clean and sweetly boned. We are not out to upend what is here. We work with what we have, try to bring ourselves into it, make it reflect us. Our "concept" is paint, our well-used pots, vases, soft lamps, an oddly dramatic 100-year-old Spanish chandelier with its patina of years of smoke and restaurant life. There is no theory for how this will unravel.

I don't believe in making food as original as possible either, but in cooking with what you know, as a translation, as tapping into memory, in making things beautifully believable in your way, for an ephemeral, bluish moment.

There will be the clear clean flavors of vegetables under the melting spiced meats of the rotisserie; pomegranate and tangerine jewels with almonds, greens, shaved radish and soft feta underneath; wide pounded cutlets sautéed golden with the spike of chilled lemony scallion chimichurri; warm plums oven-roasted with cinnamon sticks over saffron ice cream ... a kind of painting, I hope, or a blues in our dishes.

The few paintings we've collected sporadically over the years — some in muted green-blue-browns — all speak intimately to the new walls, as though we assembled them for the place itself. The large one on the right as you come in is of the intersection under the freeway our old restaurant faced. The artist, Larry Morace, stuck his head in our door 20 years ago, saying he thought we might like to see it. We bought it in trade on the spot. It now hums through Gardenias.

When we painted the walls dark blue, something tingled in me. I tweeted: "Paint party with generous friends, and oh how Gardenias was transformed from a rotisserie take-away into a restaurant; how I felt that in trade on the spot. It now hums through my throat."

Blue is said to be an undesirable color against food, an appetite suppressant. But then there is that blue of stinging desire, and the blue of passion and titillation — blue films. You might say there are also blues of hunger. And it's those I want to mine.

Plus, we are contrarians through and through.

At some point, exhausted, alone in Gardenias with unpacked boxes, tools, paint-riveted hands, white sanded wall powder everywhere, I try to see it full, humming, and have one of my rare pauses; wonder if it will in fact be that way, if it will carry us. The quick blue of incertitude.

A friend tweets about the prospect of our new restaurant: "So — yes — tongue rolling, seizures and reverie."

I notice recently that some gardenias are so white they're almost blue, star-bright blue.

Dana Tommasino is chef and co-owner of Gardenias, at 1963 Sutter Street near Fillmore, slated to open any moment now. It will be open for dinner every evening except Tuesday.

## Brenda Calls Off Po' Boy Shop on Fillmore

After three years of waiting, Cajun food restaurateur Brenda Buenavaje has lost her appetite to open a Southern style Original Po' Boys sandwich shop on lower Fillmore.

The chef-owner of the widely praised Brenda's French Soul Food on Polk Street — and the newer Brenda's Meat & Three on Divisadero — says she has tossed in the towel on a Fillmore outpost after delays dragged on and on. She declined to discuss the specifics of the deal, but acknowledged it was dead.

She was negotiating to combine the two storefronts at 1406 and 1408 Fillmore two blocks south of Geary previously occupied by Domino's Pizza and the Express Yourself coffee shop.

New Orleans-born Buenavaje envisioned a counter-service shop with a menu offering 20 different versions of her own po' boy recipes. The menu she was planning included traditional fried catfish, oyster, shrimp and calamari po' boys.

Last fall, when she opened Brenda's Meat & Three at 919 Divisadero, she said the Fillmore project was still on, but described it as moving at "a snail's pace." Some of her po'boys are now on the menu of her Divisadero Street restaurant.

■ ONE PERFECT THING | MARK FANTINO

## The Best Cocktail in Town: Dosa's Peony

I TELL ANYONE who will listen that the best cocktails in the city can be narrowed down to a list of five: the Kona cocktail at Smugglers Cove, the Dolores Park Swizzle at Beretta, Bar Agricole's Singapore Sling (not on the menu, so you have to ask for it), the authentic Mai Tai at the Kona Club near the actual tombstone of Victor "Trader Vic" Bergeron — and, sitting at the very top of the list, the inimitable Peony cocktail at our very own Dosa at Fillmore and Post.

Dosa's signature Spice Route cocktail list is the most innovative in the city. South Indian cuisine historically must have been innocent of cocktails, which makes creating a list of this caliber much more challenging. Dosa carefully and consciously chose to focus on India's colonial ties with gin, while so many bartenders and mixologists turn from this otherwise sleepy spirit and look the other way.

I remember one afternoon expressing to the bartender my then-genuine ignorance of gin. He gave me a crash course on its history, lining up thimble-like tastes of gin through the ages — starting with examples of Holland's "jenever" (sometimes "genever," both a reference to the dominant flavor of juniper) prevalent in 16th century Holland; followed by Old Tom gin, popular in the 18th century; on to Plymouth and London Dry gins, which many of us have had without quite knowing it. It was a valuable yet dizzying education.

On another occasion, the bartender



Dosa's Peony cocktail, made with gin

was spotlighting a drink made with Indian Jaggery. I had only ever heard of jaggery when reading about one of Gandhi's famous fastings when he only had water and jaggery. Jaggery is a unique sugar that Dosa imports from India. The bartender, inspired by my enthusiastic curiosity, disappeared to the kitchen and re-emerged holding a three-pound lump of this prized sugar wrapped in aluminum foil. He pried off a small piece for me to try; it's pliable and soft, reminiscent of sugary dates. You can try it, too, in Dosa's Ginger Ante cocktail.

Because of Dosa's location on Fillmore Street, it has been a common stop for me before concerts at The Fillmore, or a

film at the Kabuki, and as a way to while away the wait at State Bird Provisions. However, my favorite time and excuse to sit at Dosa is during midafternoon when the sun is slung down on an angle in the west and the light filters in and bathes the mother of pearl bar top, embedded with chunks of amber and turquoise, and lights it up like a giant bar of glowing nougat.

Dosa's cocktail list is clearly hitting above its weight — and there is certainly one for every kind of person or mood: the Wry Rajah and Emerald Monk are two that should also be considered.

But to me, the Peony is a transcendent experience. It is a complicated yet thoughtful combination of kaffir lime leaves, bird's eye chili and Dosa's own hibiscus masala nectar ignited with warming spices such as cumin and coriander, coconut milk and Plymouth gin shaken with a lot of ice. The result served up is an elegantly smooth and luscious cocktail with a lullaby of gently warming spice, a triumphant top note of fragrant and spellbinding kaffir lime, an undertow of coconut whispering a mantra — all ghostly and enveloped in the silhouette of botanical gin.

Sitting at Dosa in midafternoon with the sun splashing in on the nougat-like bar with a Peony cocktail and a small plate of transparently thin and crisp pappadum, plus a sampler of homemade chutneys to dip into, is a perfect thing about to happen.

"The Peony at Dosa"  
 VIDEO | [newfillmore.com](http://newfillmore.com)

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## DANCE

*"I came back to make my home a better place — and I think the way I can do that is by teaching dance."*

— CORINNE NAGATA  
owner of Nagata Dance in Japantown



ERIK ANDERSON

# Doing More Than Dance

Corinne Nagata Is Building a Community in Japantown

BY JULIA IRWIN

**I**TAUGHT MY very first dance class half a block away, at the Japanese Community Center, when I was still in college," says Corinne Nagata, owner of Nagata Dance, a second-floor studio in Japantown with a bird's eye view of the Peace Plaza pagoda. "And my grandfather had a frame shop about five blocks away on Fillmore Street. He's 103 now — incredibly witty and somebody who's influenced me a lot. He was actually my landlord's Boy Scout leader."

Nagata, a San Francisco native, says she "went away to New York and did all the dance stuff there," including stints at Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre, the National Dance Institute and the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

"But I came back here because it's my hometown and my family is here. It's nice to be back in this neighborhood again," she says. "I also came back to make my home a better place and I think the way I can do that is by teaching dance — and not just teaching it, but sharing it with more people."

After returning to San Francisco, the prodigal dancer and teacher started a dance camp, operating from makeshift sites around the city: a church basement, a community center, a school, a synagogue. Last summer, she opened the doors to Nagata Dance at 1740 Buchanan.

"I was so relieved I didn't have to find any more

spaces," she says. "This is our home and it's going to be our home forever and ever."

While Nagata Dance offers some classes for adults, including the Horton technique, a specialized form of modern dance, the focus is on teaching children.

"I like teaching their little brains that are so like sponges that they just want to soak up the informa-



tion," Nagata says. "I teach in a very structured and very fun way — and through that way of teaching, they learn a tremendous amount."

Nagata is glad to be ensconced again among familiar faces and places, and proud of her slick but homey new studio — especially the state-of-the-art floors, composed of 11 layers to cushion leaping dancers.

Corinne Nagata (top) in her dance studio in Japantown. Above, young dancers on location.

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# Bringing Dance to Japantown

► FROM PAGE 9

"Most dance floors are not so great on the body," she says. "But this is amazing."

Less directly, Nagata also attends to the aspiring dancers by helping to calm their jitters and performance anxieties.

"This is our Hall of Fame," she says, pointing to a back stairwell near the side of the dance stage hung with inspiring messages and photos. "While the kids are so nervous, waiting to perform, we have them sit here and they do a little artwork and start to say things like 'I love dancing!' and 'Dancing is my favorite thing!' Just little messages about how dance makes them feel, or things that will make people feel happy."

At Nagata Dance, students learn not only to dance, but also to perform — to share their excitement about their newfound skills and show them off to the community.

Each week of summer dance camp, which runs for seven weeks beginning in mid-June, the students and teachers concentrate on a different theme. During Let's Moonwalk week, for example, they dance to Michael Jackson tunes all week and work at mastering his iconic moonwalk move.

Another week is dubbed Yoga and Funky Monkey. "I love yoga and kids love yoga, too — when it's taught right," Nagata says.

Every Friday, dance campers spend the day sharing their new moves. They first perform, flash mob style, in the open-air Buchanan Street mall, then beside the pagoda in Peace Plaza before heading up to Bush Street to Kokoro, the senior complex. Finally, they perform for parents and friends in the studio.

"We don't just dance secluded in a studio. We use dance as a tool to build community. That's really important to me," Nagata says.

She also strives to share dance with students who can't afford classes, through a scholarship program called the Celebration Team.

"We bring children from poor schools into the space and they get to dance for free," says Nagata. "We've volunteered over 100 hours to this program. I love that! I wish I had the opportunity to be five years old and be able to dance for free."

Nagata also teaches free classes on-site



Corinne Nagata in the stairwell Hall of Fame, where artwork helps calm nerves before performances. Below, on location in the school.



Children of different ages all get a chance to dance together. The emphasis is on collaboration, not competition.

"It's a lot more family friendly, and a lot less competitive," says Kate Leidlein, 13, who was a counselor at dance camp this summer. "Other studios I've been to were very focused on competition. Ms. Nagata doesn't do that. It's just super fun. Kids just enjoy it."

It may be fun, but experienced teachers make dance class a serious learning experience as well. For 11-year-old Nathalie Fiszman, a dance camper for the third year in a row, it's the quality teaching that makes Nagata Dance stand out.

"I learned how to dance a lot better," Fiszman says. "Ms. Nagata taught me how to use my mind more. She taught me that you can be really, really stiff or really, really floppy. She made sure that we were okay with the dance that we were doing, and that we were caught up. And I think that makes it pretty special."

She adds: "And I think she picked a really good spot for the studio. The community's really nice and they really respect us when we're dancing."

For founder Corinne Nagata, it's the idea of community that matters most.

"I would like the community to recognize Nagata Dance as a heartfelt place with quality dance — and a company that's trying to do more than just dance," she says. "I don't think we're going to change the world, but I do think that dance has tremendous power to bring people together."

at schools around the Bay Area. For teacher Brenda Wong, this outreach approach to dance is a novel one.

"I've never worked outreach dance before and Corinne is big with outreach," Wong says. "She tries to bring movement to as many people as she can. I've strictly been in a studio where the kids come to you, so this is a new experience. We go to the kids and we teach them in their space. I like that. It's different. It's exciting."

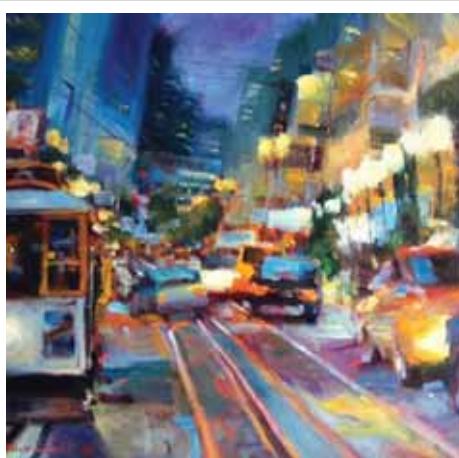
Wong, who has 10 years of teaching experience, especially recalls her first experience with Nagata, teaching a hip-hop class to children barely more than toddlers.

"These kids were doing things that I've never seen 4- and 5-year-olds do before — more intricate, complex dance moves," Wong says. "And I was really impressed by that."

Nagata Dance recently volunteered to conduct dance classes at a school in Chinatown, where most students had recently immigrated and spoke little English.

"These kids had never danced before," Wong says. "And so to see the joy on their faces, it's just great. It's what it's all about."

Joy takes center stage at Nagata Dance, where classes are offered in everything from ballet and jazz to hip-hop and yoga.



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# 'Plastic Man' Gives Junk a New Life

Bail bondsman turns castoffs into sculpture

By PAM FEINSILBER

**T**OWARD THE END of the documentary *Plastic Man: The Artful Life of Jerry Ross Barrish*, we see Barrish, San Francisco's most famous bail bondsman, at his 50th high school reunion. He is shocked to find most of his Lincoln High classmates retired — "playing golf or something" — while he is still in mid-career.

"Mid-career" is a phrase you hear more often in an art museum, when a contemporary artist is given a retrospective of work thus far. And, in fact, Barrish is an artist himself. Now in his 70s, he has shut down his bail bond office across from the Hall of Justice. But he is only a little past mid-career in creating his detritus-based sculpture — what the Fresno Art Museum called "Art Drecko" in an exhibition of his found-art assemblages.

Barrish creates figures of people and animals from castoff plastic and other junk he scavenges, and all of a sudden it seems he's the man of the moment.

His work is on view this month in a new



Says bail bondsman and sculptor Jerry Barrish: "Michelangelo said the rocks speak to him. Well, this plastic stuff speaks to me."

exhibition, *Sculptures from the Plastic Man*, at Studio Gallery at 1641 Pacific Avenue. And William Farley's 75-minute *Plastic Man* documentary is part of this year's San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, with screenings in San Francisco, Palo Alto and Berkeley.

Even so, while Barrish's work can be found in the permanent collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, the Oakland Museum of California, Napa's di Rosa Preserve and others, he is still waiting for his first major museum exhibition.

That's the kind of "affirmation" — a word he uses often — he's still hoping to find. Many critics consider abstract work loftier

than anything figurative, whether on canvas or on a pedestal. Maybe Barrish would get more widespread respect if he sculpted more monumental pieces in bronze, like the lean, 15-foot horn player he creates at the end of the film after winning a public art competition for a new installation at the Hunters Point shipyard. According to the critics and curators interviewed in the film, the main reason he doesn't get more respect is that he works with the lowliest stuff on earth.

At first, he found most of his material washed up on the beach in front of his house in Pacifica. Now Barrish goes to recycling centers. Usually he envisions a

figure in a piece of junk and brings it to life. All of his sculptures are clever and whimsical, but many also have a surprising depth of feeling. Take the slumped and dejected being in "Even Angels Get the Blues," or the two figures in what seems close conversation in "Alpha & Beta."

Go to the gallery, and you can see for yourself. Go see the movie, and you can find out how Barrish works, and why.

*For more information on the exhibition, call Studio Gallery at 415-931-3130 or visit studiogallerysf.com. For more about the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, go to sffjff.org.*

By BRIDGET MALEY

**T**HE APARTMENT BUILDING at 2360 Pacific Avenue, near Fillmore Street, was built just prior to the 1929 stock market crash as an intense period of apartment development in Pacific Heights was ending.

The building, with both Art Deco and Spanish Colonial Revival influences, is a somewhat schizophrenic remnant of the Roaring '20s. It oozes the glamour of an earlier era. Yet its multi-light, industrial sash windows, which dominate the front facade, were almost never used in residential buildings. Here these windows resulted in one of the more interesting apartment facades in the neighborhood — and a brilliant design decision by a not-so-well-known architect, Edward Grosvenor Bolles.

Arriving in California in the 1890s, Bolles was in partnership with architect Albert Schroepfer for a period of time. Schroepfer was the son of a German-born architect who built Frederick Beringer's Rhine House in St. Helena. Together, Schroepfer and Bolles designed a home in West Clay Park, several loft-style office and warehouse buildings South of Market and numerous apartment buildings, including a few others in Pacific Heights. The building at 2360 Pacific may be one of this team's best remaining buildings; many of its earliest designs were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake.

Census records indicate Bolles married in 1895, and he and his wife, Ida Savage, had four children. However, a *Chronicle*



The facade of the apartment building at 2360 Pacific oozes the glamour of an earlier era.

## Father-Son Architects Left Their Local Mark

headline of Tuesday, December 19, 1911, indicated an imminent divorce, heralding: "Architect Has Many Affinities — Wife, in Suit for Divorce, Objects to Scope of Husband's Affections."

Bolles subsequently married Suzanne Vervin, an attorney. The 1920 census indicates they resided in an apartment building on Stockton Street near Union Square. A May 1932 article in the *Chronicle* extolled the legal skills of the second Mrs. Bolles,

who had recently argued a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. According to the article, she was also "instrumental in having a special session of the state legislature called by Governor Stephens to ratify the suffrage amendment."

E.G. Bolles died in 1939 at age 68; he would not see the architectural success of his son, John Savage Bolles.

The younger Bolles, born the year of the

great earthquake, 1906, studied engineering at the University of Oklahoma and received his architectural degree from Harvard University in 1932. Along the way, he developed a fascination for pre-Columbian archaeology and worked briefly for the Carnegie Institute documenting a Mayan site. Receiving his architectural license in 1941, just as the U.S. entered World War II, Bolles collaborated with partner Joseph Ward on wartime housing projects in Marin County and in Oakland.

In 1946, the two architects designed a house for Richard Walberg of Swinerton & Walberg builders. The house was featured in the July 1947 edition of the *Architect & Engineer* in an article titled "Tomorrow's House Today." The house, at 16 Spruce Street, sits on the Presidio wall, and was recently extensively remodeled and sold. This project put John S. Bolles on par with his peers. His career soared.

Bolles very briefly practiced with his father, designing two buildings for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island; his father died before the fair opened.

The younger Bolles also became a figure in San Francisco social circles. In 1935, he married Mary Piper, whose family owned Piper Aircraft Corp. Bolles was an avid patron of the arts, served on the board of the San Francisco Art Institute on Russian Hill and owned an art gallery in Jackson Square.

With a career spanning from the later 1930s into the early 1970s, Bolles designed projects for major corporate clients — including IBM (the site of a famous Nikita

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## Bowles Father and Son Both Designed Local Apartments

► FROM PAGE 13

Khrushchev visit in 1959), General Motors, McGraw-Hill Publishers (later the Birkenshock campus near Novato) and numerous Macy's stores. He participated as a member of a larger team that designed the Embarcadero Center, including the famous hotel architect John Portman, as well as local architect Mario Ciampi and landscape architect Lawerence Halprin.

By far one of Bolles' most visible — and much maligned — commissions was for Candlestick Park, recently demolished. Many of Bolles' Modernist works are disappearing or are threatened, including his Bay View Branch Library, which was recently replaced by a new structure.

In the 1950s and '60s, John S. Bolles designed a number of projects for the San Francisco Housing Authority, including a landmark in the neighborhood, the John F. Kennedy Towers at 2451 Sacramento, completed in 1974. This project, and many of his other works, took on the Brutalist tone, which was favored in architectural circles at the time. The

building, a distinct crescent, provides individual senior housing units accessed from outdoor hallways overlooking the neighborhood.

JFK Towers is a stark contrast to the highly decorative Art Deco-era apartment building designed by Bolles' father almost 50 years earlier.

John S. Bolles also left another local design: his own house at 2201 Lyon Street, at the corner of Jackson, which he designed and began building in 1951. This understated Modernist house of reinforced concrete has expanses of punched windows that light interior rooms, many of which are sheathed in a light-colored wood paneling. The house had a large, south-facing garden that extends to the recently reconfigured garage structure. A triangular deck off the dining room looks over the landscaped garden. Bolles lived in the

house for more than 20 years, finally selling it in the 1970s.

John Savage Bolles died in 1983, but his Modernist landmarks in the neighborhood contribute to the greater understanding of modernism in the Bay Area.

*Many of John Bolles' Modernist works are disappearing, including the recently demolished Candlestick Park.*



John Savage Bolles designed a number of projects for the San Francisco Housing Authority, including the John F. Kennedy Towers at 2451 Sacramento, completed in 1974.

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2727 Gough St	3	2	2	2,929	2	7/14/2015	3,500,000	3,500,000
2736 Filbert St	4	3	1	3,600	235	6/16/2015	4,600,000	4,450,000
3383 Clay St	4	3	2		10	6/25/2015	3,995,000	4,500,000
2622 Chestnut St	5	4	1	4,210	46	6/17/2015	4,995,000	4,600,000
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1940 Buchanan St #A 0 1 0 516 11 7/7/2015 399,000 455,000
2999 California St #305 1 1 0 61 7/8/2015 549,000 575,000
1900 Sutter St #7 1 1 1 651 20 7/13/2015 549,000 721,000
2077 Jackson St #107 1 1 1 30 7/7/2015 735,000 760,000
2800 California St #402 2 1 1 800 32 6/23/2015 799,000 815,000
2701 Van Ness Ave #202 1 1 1 826 12 7/15/2015 698,000 850,000
2172 Pine St #2 1 1 1 39 6/26/2015 799,000 901,000
1998 Broadway #1603 1 1 1 725 19 6/30/2015 938,000 930,000
2345 Jackson St #2 1 1 1 36 7/1/2015 785,000 950,000
2185 Bush St #208 2 2 1 897 12 7/14/2015 995,000 1,005,000
2046 Greenwich St #2 1 1 1 1,004 27 7/7/2015 977,000 1,060,000
1895 Pacific Ave #305 1 1 1 1,115 13 7/1/2015 995,000 1,075,000
3010 Sacramento St 2 1 1 25 6/29/2015 895,000 1,105,000
3101 Clay St #2 1 1 1 12 7/15/2015 929,000 1,115,000
1855 Sacramento St #2 2 1 2 1,222 8 6/26/2015 925,000 1,305,000
1775 Broadway #72 2 1 1,069 13 6/19/2015 1,199,000 1,427,000
1835 Franklin St #1003 2 2 1 18 7/15/2015 1,495,000 1,560,000
1568 Union St #301 2 2 1 1,183 12 6/30/2015 1,198,000 1,505,013
2447 Vallejo St #1 1 1 0 1,325 21 6/29/2015 1,295,000 1,510,000
2715 Pine St 3 2 1 14 6/18/2015 1,299,000 1,850,000
250 Laurel St #202 3 2 1 28 7/8/2015 2,700,000 2,405,000
3439 Sacramento St #401 3 2 2 1,942 35 7/10/2015 2,495,000 2,495,000
2249 Clay St #1 3 2 2 10 7/15/2015 1,995,000 2,532,000
1925 Gough St 2 3 1 1,830 12 7/2/2015 1,998,000 2,700,000
2259 Clay St 3 3 2 10 6/18/2015 3,400,000 3,800,000

### Rare: condo for under half a million



In a real estate market as mind-blowingly expensive as San Francisco, sales with smaller price tags tend to stand out as much as the huge blockbusters that make headlines — especially as they become more and more rare.

That's the case with 1940 Buchanan Street #A (far left), a studio unit that sold for \$455,000 on July 7. Located two blocks north of the heart of Japantown, the ground-level unit measures 516 square feet, meaning that the buyer paid \$882 per square foot. The sale demonstrates that in a market with so much pent-up demand and few available homes, even small units without parking spots can become hot commodities. The Buchanan Street unit sold in a brisk 11 days, and for 14 percent more than the asking price.

Locally, sales of condos for less than half a million dollars are becoming increasingly uncommon. According to data from the multiple listing service, 22 units under that price point sold in the neighborhood in 2013, while 21 changed hands in 2014. So far this year, there have been only four such transactions in the neighborhood — a testament to escalating prices.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.

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The Multi-lingual Friendship Line is not an emergency phone service. It is a community support project by Institute on Aging and Department of Adult and Aging services of the City and County of San Francisco, partially funded through the Mental Health Services Act.

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