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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ JANUARY 2019



Hail & Farewell

A new year begins without a few old friends

PAGES 8 & 9

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK EVANS

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CORRESPONDENCE

IT'S 'OUR TOWN'

I WAS IMPRESSED beyond measure with *Our Town* when the book had its coming out party at Browser Books in December.

It's a beautiful publication, a lavish coffee table book with gorgeous photographs and a collection of treasured stories. While it's about the neighborhood, the Fillmore has always been about more than geographic boundaries. It's about the community within those streets. It's about the long, rich history of this part of San Francisco, about the people who live and work here, about the daily interactions and goings on in our 'hood. More importantly, it's about urban living.

It's the story, in a way, of any town, and it reminds us once again why we care so passionately about where we live.

BARBARA WYETH

I began my day with coffee and a browse of your new publication. Three hours later the coffee was gone and I was still reading. I just could not put it down.

It's a lovely tour through the distant past, the recent past and the present. I don't think I'm alone in observing that the editors of the *New Fillmore* are responsible not only for the record, but for also your roles in treasuring the community and helping to keep it alive and lively. Many, many thanks for this treasure. It is beautifully written and lovingly photographed.

CLAIRE CARLEVARO

I went over last evening to Browser Books and bought your new book. And it's a beautiful book. It's kind of a love affair with the old Fillmore, and I'm very proud to be in it.

JOHN GAUL

What a wondrous collection of stories is *Our Town*. Is it me, or is Fillmore the last real neighborhood left in this ever-changing city? The book really champions the weird and wonderful characters who made — and make — this neighborhood so interesting.

I especially love the way you've saddled past and present side-by-side. By not including the dates of publication, the stories read as vibrantly and shimmery as if they are all happening right now.

DIANE TUCKER

Instead of skipping around, I chose to experience the book page by page, which offers the time traveler inside me a much more languid sightseeing journey, as opposed to a deliberate finger-pecking hunt.

I recall my own introduction to the Fillmore in the mid-1990s. My sister was a dental student at University of the Pacific, then at Webster and Sacramento. I used to drive up from the South Bay to get her to work on my teeth. On my first visit I arrived early and killed time at the Rolling Pin, the donut shop on the corner of California and Fillmore. After my first appointment my sister took me to Ten-Ichi, recommending her favorite hot udon. The novacaine had not totally worn off, which made for tricky eating. On a subsequent visit she took me to Vivande, where I would later work for more than a decade.

Over the years I got to know the neighborhood and its characteristic places like the cacophony of squawks and whistles at the bird shop, the vitamin store, the hardware store, the richness of Fillmento and Ruth Dewson's frankness. Reading through *Our Town* brings back many fond memories.

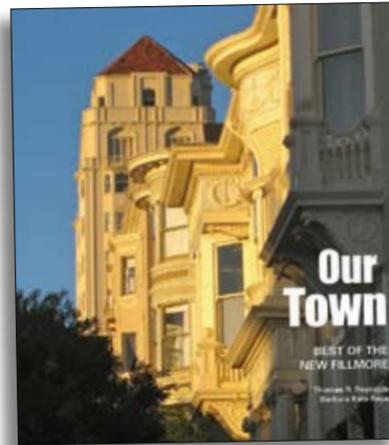
MARK FANTINO

Clean It Up

As a longtime home owner in the neighborhood, I have watched the remarkable transition of our houses, shops and clientele. With these changes has come a disturbing level of garbage and general filth.

The sidewalks, gutters and plants are now filled with trash, empty food containers, bottles and animal waste. Mollie Stone's appears to have given up entirely on cleaning its sidewalks and grounds. The hedges that surround the parking lot have become a growing collection of discarded rubbish.

People now walk through the accumulation of trash on the sidewalks without seeing it, and appear to simply drop containers from Smitten, Sift, the Loop and Delfina on the sidewalk as if it is acceptable. I implore businesses to clean their storefronts — even if it means sweeping the sidewalk benches and gutters — collect the garbage and maintain their properties to reflect the world-class neighborhood we have become.



THE NEW FILLMORE

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Connecting the neighborhood

Every month, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore circulate to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and welcome your ideas and suggestions.



newfillmore.com | for updates and archives



YouTube



Bird on a wire

The long-running makeover of Alta Plaza Park has been declared complete, for now. The refurbished Jackson-Pierce entry reopened near the end of the year with a new pathway and four asymmetrically placed benches honoring local people and pets. Left undisturbed was the utility pole that mars one of the city's most spectacular views.

Lawsuits Multiply Over the Fillmore Heritage Center

FOUR DAYS before Christmas, neighborhood businessman Agonafer Shiferaw filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging fraud and deceit at the Fillmore Heritage Center. It charges that Mayor London Breed, Supervisor Vallie Brown and other city officials violated laws and engaged in other wrongdoing that has cost roughly \$100 million in failed public and private investments — and “contributed to the stagnant economic conditions that continue to plague the city’s historic Fillmore District.”

Shiferaw, who owns local commercial real estate and formerly operated the Rasselas Jazz Club at 1534 Fillmore, alleges the city’s attempt to find a new owner of the center — including the vast space once occupied by Yoshi’s jazz club and restaurant — “was characterized by irregularities that side-stepped procedural safeguards.”

He is seeking an injunction to prevent the city from further leasing or selling the center. The issue is scheduled to be heard on February 13.

The suit zeroes in on the city’s request for proposals in February 2017, which Shiferaw claims bypassed prescribed procedures and set up a biased review panel of community

and city representatives. The lawsuit alleges some members “had no discernible connection to the community, nor any qualifications other than that they were friends and supporters of London Breed” and that Breed informed two panel members — including the Rev. Amos Brown, who is also named as a defendant in the case — that they had been selected even before the process was announced.

Shiferaw, doing business as the Republic of Fillmore, claims that he submitted a timely proposal that met all of the conditions specified: having immediately available capital, offering a viable business plan and including a diverse set of community benefits. But he contends that when he complained to the city attorney and the Ethics Commission that the review was not being conducted fairly, the city abruptly terminated the process, rejecting all proposals. The suit charges the effort “was a fraud and a charade from start to finish, designed as a pretext and a smokescreen to sidestep state and local government contracting and bidding laws, and to steer the project into the hands of defendants’ chosen cronies.”

In October, the city gave control of the center, plus

\$50,000 to stage events under a six-month lease, to the New Community Leadership Foundation and the San Francisco Housing Development Corp. Shiferaw’s suit claims neither group has experience operating an entertainment venue.

Other lawsuits related to the center are also pending. Last August, the city attorney sued developer Michael Johnson, seeking repayment of \$5.5 million Johnson borrowed to build the center, but has not repaid.

In response, Johnson countersued the city, alleging city officials engaged in bad faith conduct by insisting that the venue continue to operate as a jazz club and restaurant “even when it became readily apparent that this use was not economically viable.” As a result, his lawsuit contends, while Yoshi’s on Fillmore generated an average of \$10 million for each of the six years it operated, it had net losses of more than \$350,000 each year.

Johnson claims he obtained an offer from Whole Foods to operate a grocery store, restaurant and brew pub in the space, which the city ignored. A jury trial has been requested, but no court date has been set.



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CRIME WATCH

Theft

Octavia and Page

November 5, between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

A man woke up and discovered that his laptop had been stolen. He had placed it near a window of his apartment, which was open, and did not realize it was missing until the next morning. Police have no suspects at this time.

Robbery

Clement and 8th

November 19, 8:21 a.m.

Two men entered a Walgreens store, picked up several items and left. Employees recognized the two, and later learned that a set of store keys had been reported missing. The same two men entered the store three more times during the following week, and the police put out a crime brief displaying pictures of the suspects. On November 30, police who were addressing a homeless encampment in the Tenderloin saw the two and placed them under arrest. One was carrying the missing keys from Walgreens. He was booked at county jail for robbery, possession of stolen property and for having an outstanding warrant. The second suspect was booked for burglary and robbery with a knife.

Burglary

Geary and 8th

November 20, 8:40 p.m.

Officers spotted an individual in a parking lot peering into car windows. They followed the man, then watched as he broke the window of a car, reached in and removed several items. He was apprehended without incident and booked at county jail for second degree burglary and possession of stolen property and burglary tools.

Arson

Octavia and Rose

November 21, 11:55 p.m.

A witness saw an unknown man set fire to a trash bin near the side of the street, then flee eastbound. The trash bin was extensively damaged. The witness described the suspect as a male between 20 to 30 years old. Police are still investigating the matter.

Robbery

Geary and Webster

November 28, 3 p.m.

A man approached a woman who was looking at her cell phone and attempted to snatch it from her. After a struggle, the attacker got control of the phone and fled on foot, along with two accomplices. The woman was injured during the scuffle, but refused transport to a hospital. The matter is still under investigation.

Theft, Trespassing

Pierce and Golden Gate

December 3, 10:55 p.m.

A passerby spotted a trespasser on school grounds and called the police. The officers located the individual, who had been caught on school grounds before and repeatedly ordered to stay away. The suspect took several items of school property while he

was on the premises. When the officers conducted a computer query, they learned there was a no-bail warrant for his arrest. The suspect was transported to county jail.

Theft

Gough and Fell

December 4, 5:15 p.m.

A man on a bike rode up behind a woman walking on the sidewalk and snatched her purse, which contained cash and a cell phone. He then fled toward Van Ness on the bike. The thief was described as a male about 20 years old. Police have no suspects at this time.

Burglary

Japantown

December 5, 10 p.m.

Street crimes officers were patrolling Japantown when they saw a man walking down the street, casing cars with a flashlight. They followed the suspect until he broke into a car. The officers then confronted the burglar, who fled on foot, jumped a fence and continued to evade them before they finally caught and arrested him. The suspect was booked without further incident.

Shooting

Webster and Turk

December 8, 3:10 p.m.

A man and a woman got into a fight that escalated, ending when the man shot the woman. She was not seriously injured, but arriving officers transported her to a hospital. Police were unable to locate the shooter, who remains at large. He is described as a 25-year-old male. Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to call the anonymous tip line at 415-885-5187.

Vandalism, Battery

Pine and Polk

December 8, 6:45 p.m.

Two intoxicated women entered the Shalimar restaurant during the SantaCon pub crawl. One woman complained to a member of the staff that she had paid for her food but had not received it. The staff member denied that was the case, and told her he had not served her because she was too drunk. The woman then swiped items off the counter, knocking down the cash register and throwing a jar at the employee. When confronted, she punched a staff member in the face. Her companion picked up a chair and smashed the restaurant's glass door.

Restaurant staffers called the police, but by the time they arrived, the two women had fled. However, a witness to the brawl had videotaped it and posted it on social media, where it circulated widely. Shortly afterward, the two suspects turned themselves in to the police. The women, both 21 years old, were placed under arrest. One was charged with misdemeanor battery; both were charged with felony vandalism.

Terrorist Threats

5th and Balboa

December 12, 9 p.m.

While two men were arguing, one of them pro-

duced a chainsaw and started chasing the other. The assailant then shouted threats, promising to return later with a gun.

The chainsaw-wielding man had fled by the time police arrived, but was identified by the man he had threatened. The police investigative team obtained a search warrant and searched the suspect's house. They found two firearms, which were seized and booked into evidence. The suspect was booked at county jail for making terrorist threats and for disturbing the peace.

Aggravated Assault

Possession of a Prohibited Weapon

6th and Anza

December 14, 9:30 p.m.

A man was standing outside his residence when an individual approached him, demanding money while wielding a board with a large nail projecting from it. The resident refused to comply and called the police. Officers located the suspect nearby. An arrest search revealed that the suspect was carrying metal knuckles as well as methamphetamine. He later stated that he had been drinking heavily that day and was high on meth. He was arrested and booked at county jail.

Robbery

Fillmore and Bush

December 15, 3 p.m.

A man known as a habitual shoplifter entered the Walgreens store with three companions. The store security guard saw all four stash cosmetic products into bags they carried. He instructed them to return the stolen property. They refused. During the struggle that ensued, one suspect threw a shopping basket at the guard, striking him in the head.

The security guard then called the police. All four suspects fled before the officers arrived. The guard indicted their direction of flight; the officers caught one at once and found a second robber hiding in a nearby parking lot. One suspect was arrested, one was admonished and two are still at large and remain unidentified.

Attempted Armed Robbery

Franklin and Clay

December 18, 5 p.m.

Officers on patrol heard a woman shouting, "Call the police!" The officers then spotted a robbery in progress: a man was struggling to take a backpack from another man. The suspect saw the police, gave up the struggle and fled on foot. The officers pursued the thief and arrested him. The man who was nearly robbed stated to the police that, when he returned to his car, he saw that it had been burglarized and his backpack was missing from the trunk.

He took a walk around the immediate area and came upon a man rifling through his backpack. He confronted the robber, who shouted threats at him, then attacked him physically, trying to stab him in the stomach with a knife. The suspect dropped the knife as he was fleeing from the police, but the officers recovered it. He was booked at county jail.

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The Inspector Returns

By CHRIS BARNETT

LIFE IS TOUGH enough these days for Fillmore Street merchants — no need to count the ways. Now another inspector from City Hall has returned to the street to add to the challenges, threatening store owners who have A-frame signs out front on the sidewalk.

According to **ALBERT RAINER**, owner of **PALMER'S TAVERN**, she is downright nasty. “She refused to give me her name or her card when I asked her to tell me the rules regarding the sign promoting my weekend brunch,” he says. “She was very aggressive and mean and told me: ‘You will get my name when I send you a letter with a \$300 ticket.’” Rainer says he’s already paid the city \$3,000 to get a no parking white zone adjacent to Palmer’s, in addition to a \$300 ticket for his sign. “I told her if this keeps up, I’m going to be bankrupt. She said: ‘That’s OK, someone else will move in.’”

CLAUDIO BARONE, owner of **COTTAGE INDUSTRY**, the eclectic shop a block north of Palmer’s, said the inspector told him to remove his A-frame sign, and he did. Then she asked him to put it back on the sidewalk so she could take a picture of it. He refused. Barone, who claims he’s already paid \$1,400 in fines and assessments, says he’s tried to have meetings with city officials twice and both were cancelled.

AMY KRONK, manager of **SECONDS TO GO**, the San Francisco Symphony’s resale shop next door to Palmer’s, says she’s trying to figure out how to share the shop’s donations drop-off A-frame sign with Palmer’s. Her shop hasn’t been ticketed yet, but she’s heard about the inspector’s threats on the street. “It’s silly — a sign is just a little self-promotion,” she says. Kronk doesn’t want to rock the boat, but is applying for an outdoor sales license so she can put a rack of clothes outside. “Sidewalk shopping is exciting,” she says.

Late last year, an inspector was rudely collecting back “rents” from restaurants with tables on the sidewalk even though the city had not sent rent due notices for several years. No one expected a freebee, but all complained — mostly anonymously, fearing reprisals — that City Hall didn’t need to send an antagonistic staffer around to lay down its law. Now a number of places have removed their tables and chairs, leaving the street a less-lively scene.

“I am so mad at this city,” says **LEVON DER BEDROSSIAN**, owner of **LA MEDITERRANEE** at 2210 Fillmore, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. He was stung for having a few tables on the sidewalk and threatened for having an A-frame sign. But while he said the inspector he talked with was pleasant, and not arrogant, he was forced to buy two \$300 custom made benches to comply with city regulations and was accused of being delinquent for years even though he wasn’t billed. “I said: ‘Are you kidding? Why haven’t we heard from you? The city screws up and it costs us time and money.’”



DREW ALTZER

Noosh is near

The most anticipated opening in the neighborhood is still a few weeks away, but Noosh, coming to Fillmore and Pine, was aglow with private parties during the holidays.

■ **A SHORTER COMMUTE:** In 1989 **DAVID TAVERNAS** moved into the neighborhood, but he’s spent the last 22 years as a lead bartender at **HARRIS’** steakhouse on Van Ness. Now the personable cocktail craftsman has shortened his commute and is practicing his considerable skills at Fillmore’s own **FLORIO**. “I love this restaurant,” he says. “It has a nice vibe. I’ve been coming here as a customer for years.”

Tavernas admits to having the perfect name for a bartender, but adds: “Just don’t call me a mixologist.” It’s a not-so-sly dig at the new breed of bar stars who fancy themselves scientific spiritmeisters experimenting with different flavors and tastes and largely ignoring their customers. His recipe for happiness on both sides of the plank: Make the guest feel welcome and comfortable, and generously free-pour the classics. He doesn’t favor the preciously measured shot glass.

During his tenure at Harris’, Tavernas poured a Diet Coke for the late former President George H.W. Bush, vodka martinis for Herb Caen (“he never took a freebee”) and soda waters for two of the richest billionaires at the time: Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, who were dining together. “Their bill was under \$100,” he recalls.

■ **COMING SOON — MAYBE:** For almost two years, the **LA BOULANGERIE** storefront at 2043 Fillmore has sat shuttered and forlorn, its distinctive blue paint peeling in the sunshine, while wave after wave of promised new culinary concepts failed to materialize. The latest promise is that it will re-open this month as a “fast pizza” eatery and takeout. Founding owner **PASCAL RIGO** — who famously sold his bakeries to Starbucks for \$100 million and then got some of them back — has two new deep-pocketed Texas investor-partners and a seasoned retail operations director from the Lone Star state, **GABRIEL MORENO**, who says some new Boulangerie cafes will open in the city. The company now owns Loving Cup frozen yogurt, too.

The Beat goes on. Send newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com or call 415-921-5092.

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Sandra Zhou and Ashleigh Miller quickly remade their new shop at 1902 Fillmore Street.

They Found What They Wanted on Fillmore

Zuri's 'just one dress' shop gets a permanent home

By SHELLEY HANDLER

ON JANUARY 3, after popping up for four months at 2029 Fillmore, the just-one-dress women's boutique Zuri put down permanent roots a block south at 1902 Fillmore in the small storefront that was home to Narumi Japanese Antiques for nearly four decades.

The clothing company sells mainly one style: a loose-fitting, below-knee-length frock with three-quarter-length sleeves that can be worn as a dress, jacket or duster. Fashioned from African wax fabric, Zuri's signature fashion item proved to be a hit with locals.

Owners and founders Ashleigh Miller and Sandra Zhou say they carefully sought out their setting. The two were looking for a shopping street both eclectic and active enough to bring the devoted and the curious their way. They methodically searched for a location that would be both showcase and gathering place, much like their flagship shop on Bleeker Street in New York.

They found what they were looking for on Fillmore Street.

The inspiration for the name of their business comes from the Swahili word *mzuri*, which means "good" — and the owners strive to deliver on that promise. While many clothing and shoe companies have created models that give back, Zuri has gone well beyond that charitable model in creating what they call a sustainable business.

"When I say sustainable, I mean creating a business and jobs that last," Zhou says. "We didn't just come in, produce some dresses, make money and leave. We are in Nairobi to stay, and we have created jobs for many women and men who make fair, dependable wages sewing for us, and will for years to come."

They say creating such work instills a sense of pride in their sewers for their ability to earn a real living and find dignity in being able care for themselves and their families.

"I also wanted to make something that people actually wanted to buy and own," Zhou says. "This is not about coming up with the hot new thing that people will tire of after the novelty of the item wears off. This is clothing that only gets better with wear, and these are pieces that suit so many body types



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and such a broad range of tastes — from quiet boardroom chic to fashion-statement bold.”

Zuri’s founders met while both were guests at a wedding in Nairobi, where Zhou was wearing the dress that would become the center of their business. She had come to Nairobi after college, following a friend who settled there. Having previously worked in New York City restaurants, she jumped at the chance to open a bakery in Nairobi that featured American-style cakes and cupcakes. The bakery, Sugar Pie, was a solid success for three years.

By then, Zhou wanted to delve into other realms. Spending time with journalist friends led her to pitch stories about food in conflict zones. It was in preparation for her travels to the Sudan that she had a simple fit-and-flare dress made out of bright native wax cloth.

Her dress caught the eye of Ashleigh Miller, who was living in Nairobi after her husband took a job there, at that fateful wedding. Pregnant at the time, Miller was taken with the easy fit of the design and the bold print of the cloth. A fast friendship began, and Zhou had a dress made for Miller.

Many compliments later, they took a chance on creating a business together and began posting their dresses for sale on Instagram. A Kenyan fashion icon, who was the host of a television program popular throughout the country, began to follow their Instagram feed and featured their dresses on her program.

From that point on, their business in Kenya quickly picked up speed. The duo began to get requests from the U.S., so they took a huge leap: They had 250 dresses made and headed for a pop-up in New York City. They were terrified at the prospect of that much stock, but needn’t have worried. *The New York Times* ran a blurb about the sale, and all 250 dresses were gone in an hour.

Stunned and thrilled by their success, they rolled up their three-quarter length sleeves and ramped up production for Zuri, selling solely online.

As production increased, their demand for fabric began to outpace the local markets. Miller took to sourcing the cloth in Tanganyika, a large port city that offers a bigger and more varied selection of wax cloth.

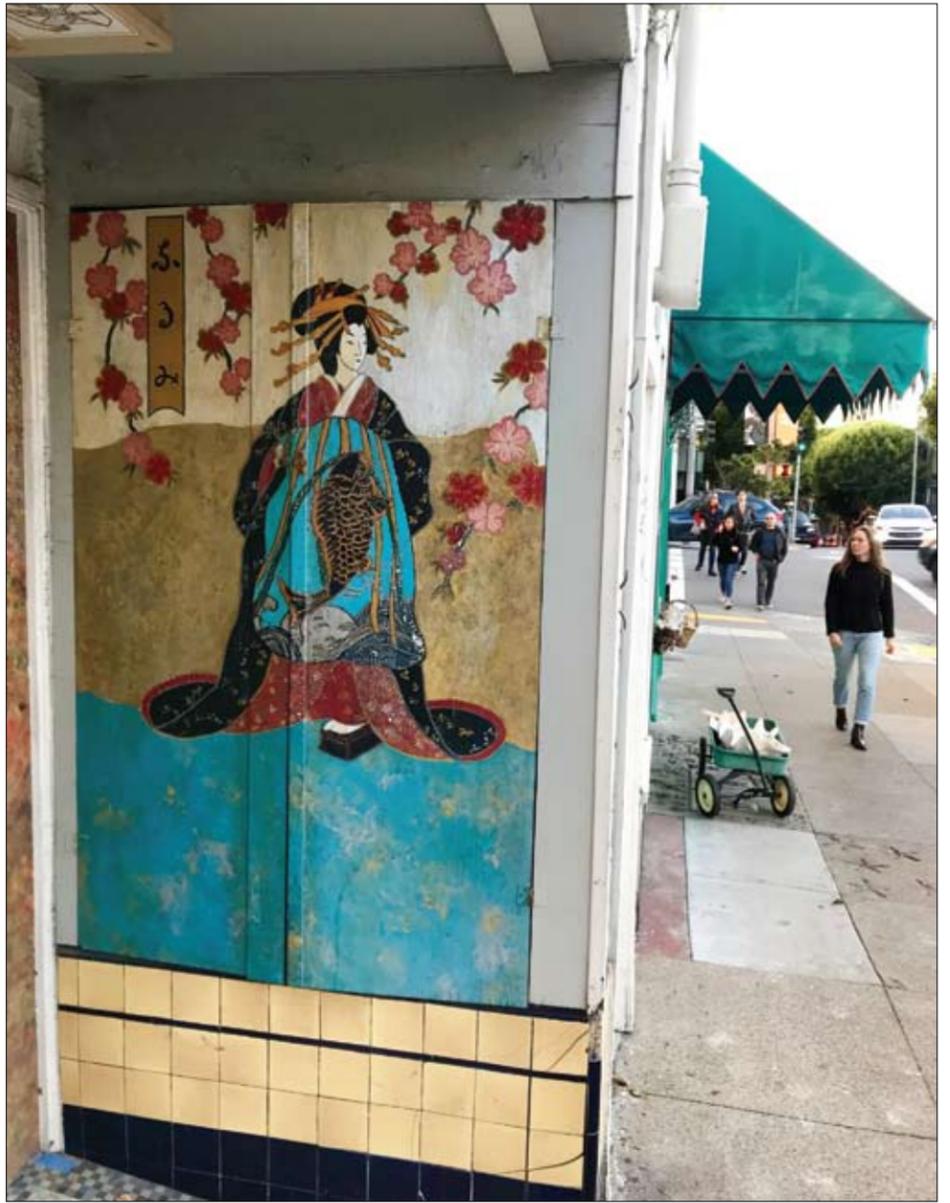
It’s the vibrancy of the designs that catch the eye and have already won the hearts of many devotees: massive hot pink carrots on a sizzling puce background; nuclear clouds in red, blue and tan; antic turquoise spirals spinning on a marigold sea.

New prints are added almost every week. The dresses sell for \$145. A smaller offering of similarly styled shirts sell for \$110 and \$120.

During a holiday stop by their Fillmore pop-up, three of the five prospective customers who came in the door were already outfitted in Zuri dresses.

“I have four of them,” confessed one.

“It think it’s a cult,” said another. “But a good one.”



A piece of the past will remain

During the 37 years Jiro Nakamura operated his shop Narumi at 1902 Fillmore, filled to overflowing with antique Japanese dolls and other treasures, he used his own artistry to create many of the shop’s fixtures and decor. One work will remain even after Zuri moves in: the mural he painted to dress up the doors on the utility meters at the entry.



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK EVANS

An Elegant Atelier

His greatest creation was his own home near Cottage Row

WHEN Bush Street resident Palmer Sessel still wore a tie and worked in the Financial District, he liked to get out of the office midday and think things over.

One day he walked by the historic Monadnock Building on Market Street and was struck by the cast of notable San Franciscans looking down at him from the *trompe l'oeil* mural above the marble cornice. The guard told him the artists who created it had a studio upstairs. He went up and engaged them to create a mural of a winged bulldog on the ceiling of the living parlor in his classic Victorian near Cottage Row.

"They tried to dissuade me" on the flying bulldog, Sessel says. But Mark Evans and Charley Brown took the commission, and also painted a Bacchanalian scene for the dining parlor, and nudes above the bed.

In the process, they also fell for the neighborhood, and decided they wanted to live here.

"I told them," Sessel recalls, "You may be in luck. The guy next door to me is dying."

The 1880s Victorian needed work, and required resisting the bureaucrats from the Redevelopment Agency, but the bones were all there. They managed to buy the house before it went on the market.



"We were in the right place at the right time," Evans says. "No one was doing murals and *trompe l'oeil* on our level. And it was mostly because of Charley's painting."

Only days after they returned from a final grand tour of the splendors of Venice and Paris, Robert Charles Brown died of prostate cancer on November 21 at home on Bush Street. His husband of 41 years, Mark Evans, and their schnauzer, Jack, survive him.

—THOMAS REYNOLDS



SELF-PORTRAIT OF CHARLEY BROWN (2017)

Au Revoir to One of the Regulars

WE WILL MISS Justice William Newsom at Chouquet's on Fillmore. He had two preferred tables that we'd set aside for him after he became a regular in recent years. We simply referred to him as "the judge."

When he came in, he'd lovingly hold the hand of whichever pretty French waitress was on duty and recite the French poem *La Cigale et la Fourmi* (*The Cricket and the Ant*) in its entirety.

Since I am not a pretty French waitress, he would always greet me respectfully with a long handshake. As I'd open a half bottle of his favorite Chateaneuf du Pape, he would sometimes confide, "Gavin's doing well." The judge's death came just weeks before his son — another former neighborhood resident — was sworn in as governor of California, serving the state his father served as a justice on the First District Court of Appeal.

Farewell, judge. Thank you for your kindness and style.

— MARK FANTINO



Justice William Newsom administering an earlier oath of office to his son, Gavin Newsom, now California's new governor.

JUSTICE WILLIAM NEWSOM FUND



Rev. Dr. James G. Emerson

SARA BUTZ

A Pair of Presbyterian Ministers Gave Calvary a Social Conscience

THE Rev. Dr. Laird J. Stuart followed the Rev. Dr. James G. Emerson as pastor of the Calvary Presbyterian Church at Fillmore and Jackson, both chronologically and in a determination to bring to the historic church a greater awareness of social justice issues. On December 19, he followed Emerson, who died three months earlier, on September 12, to the heavens.

Emerson was a powerful preacher and a pioneering pastor of Calvary in the 1980s. And he practiced what he preached about equality and justice, even getting arrested while participating in a 1987 interracial civil rights "march for brotherhood" in Forsyth County, Georgia.

In 1988, he was one of the founders of the San Francisco Interfaith Council, which brought together leaders of different faith traditions in the city. He traveled to India and met with Mother Teresa. "I

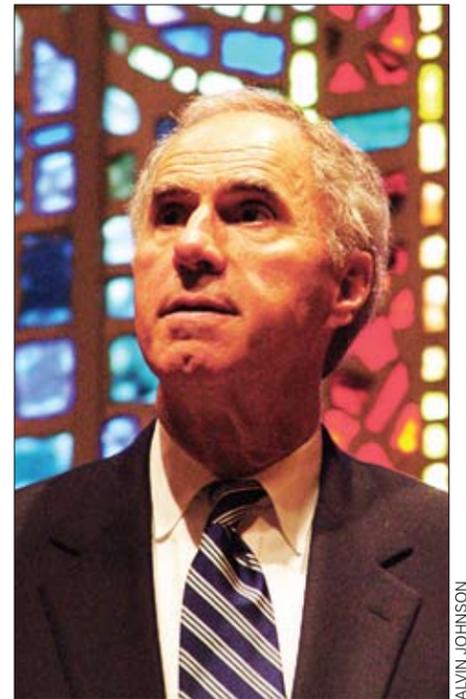
told her, 'We're Protestants, but we pray for you,' Emerson remembered. She told him: "Well pray more. We are all one people."

Stuart built on the social consciousness Emerson had brought to what was then a sometime staid, largely affluent, almost entirely white congregation.

Stuart served from 1993 to 2010 and led the fight against homophobia in the Presbyterian church. He was the first president of a nationwide group that lobbied what he called "the radical middle" in the Presbyterian church, urging that people could be ordained as ministers, deacons and elders regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Today Calvary has a diverse group of ministers and a banner hanging outside with a rainbow flag proclaiming it a sanctuary church and declaring that "Black Lives Matter" — suggesting that both men made their mark.

— FRAN MORELAND JOHNS



Rev. Dr. Laird J. Stuart

ALVIN JOHNSON

Arrivederci to an Arts Impresario and Owner of Fillmore's Vivande

ELIZABETH DERBY MIDDIONE — Lisa to her many friends on Fillmore, where she and her husband Carlo owned Vivande Porta Via for many years — died early on Christmas Eve after a long illness. She was two weeks shy of her 96th birthday.

She was a member of two noted American families. Her father, Roger Alden Derby, was descended from one of America's first millionaires, Elias Haskett Derby, who, in the 18th century, was a privateer for the United States who carried news of the American Revolution back and forth from America and England. Her mother, Elizabeth Palmer Harlan, was the elder sister of John Marshall Harlan II, a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Her great grandfather was the first Justice John Marshall Harlan, considered one of the Supreme Court's greatest justices.

Lisa Middione was a serious student of the piano. She completed studies at Julliard

and pursued her career for a short period, but was forced to give it up because of a family tragedy.

After Middione came to California, she became an impresario, sometimes presenting 350 events per year, including Marion Anderson and Marlene Dietrich. She was also a publicist for many arts organizations, including the San Francisco Symphony, Ballet and Opera, and helped create the Stern Grove Music Festival, which she directed for 10 years, and where she met her future husband.

"Carlo loves music," she once said of her partner in life and business. "We got together because of my involvement in music. Somebody brought him to Stern Grove. The story is that he saw me and announced: 'That's the woman I'm going to marry.'"

He did, in 1968, and he remained devoted to her until the end of her life.

— BETTY MEDSGER



Lisa and Carlo Middione at a tribute dinner celebrating Vivande Porta Via in 2015.

CONNIE PEREZ

How They Became Stan & Ollie

BY ANDREA CHASE

THE NEW FILM *Stan & Ollie*, a deep look at the iconic comedy duo, is slated to show at two neighborhood theaters — the Clay and the Vogue — this month, offering two bites at a real treat.

The way John C. Reilly becomes Oliver Hardy is nothing short of magical. It's not only the prosthetics that add girth, or the uncanny recreation of Hardy's idiosyncratic way of speaking: part faux British, part Georgia drawl. It's the way he has channeled the comedian's lightness of spirit, in addition to his comic timing.

For fans of the duo, whose show business career started in the silent era and went strong through the early talkies, it's a welcome relief to see how Reilly and Steve Coogan as Stan Laurel recreate one of their best known dances from 1937's *Way Out West*, as well as how they reimagine several skits using only notes from their live show.

A stand-out tribute comes when Stan and Ollie devise an impromptu entertainment for a desk clerk — something completely original. Yet it catches the spirit and the soul of what made them timeless. Reilly and Coogan, proven comedic talents, also have the gift of pathos and the understanding of how integral it is to incorporate more than mere guffaws in comedy.

The film dwells on their last tour in the 1950s. Times and tastes have changed, and the pair are working through England with a stage show they hope will revive their film careers. The ups and downs of their personal and professional relationships come to light as their mutually detesting wives (Shirley Henderson and Nina Arianda) provide unexpectedly tart comic relief to a very serious story about the fickle nature of fame and the unbreakable bonds of friendship.

Richly produced and sensitively directed by Jon S. Baird, with tracking shots that seem impossible and a script as nuanced and complex as the performances that Reilly and Coogan use to conjure Laurel and Hardy, the film is a bittersweet paean to show biz itself.

I spoke with John C. Reilly about playing Oliver Hardy and asked him whether it was a leap of faith or baby steps to play



such a well-known star. Here's his response about that and more:

It wasn't a giant leap of faith, because I didn't jump all in with one move. Jon Baird, the director, came to me with the script and I was like: "I don't know, this was such an important person to me. I don't want to sully his reputation by doing something mediocre."

So we ended up in a discussion about what this story should entail. What is the point of just recreating their work? — because their work still exists. How are we going to deepen this story? And that was very interesting to me.

I saw the computer mock-up of the make-up, and I thought: "Well, these guys are serious about incorporating interesting ideas into the script, and that's another little step and another little step."

Then I started engaging with Jeff Pope, the writer, about whether we should focus on this or that, and slowly but surely I got closer and closer to committing. And then I met Steve Coogan, who already has a great Laurel & Hardy impression in his back pocket.

Also, the truth is that Jon Baird kept saying: "It's got to be you." And I kept trying to think of someone else who could fit the bill

who could do the sort of things he wanted to do with this film, and I thought: "Well, I'm the right height. I'm the right age. My voice is somewhat similar to his. I'll never be as great as Oliver Hardy, but maybe I'm the person who's supposed to take on this mission right now, this holy quest to resuscitate the careers of Laurel & Hardy."

One of the first times I met with Steve was for lunch in New York and we were sitting there and the guys said to stand up next to each other. And the proportions were perfect! Steve is the height of Stan Laurel, and I am the height of Oliver Hardy. So then I realized, it's on! Destiny is calling. And I knew that if we were operating from a place of this elegiac last chapter of their lives, there's a lot of interesting stuff there that you can't get on Wikipedia and you can't get in a biography. And it was worth doing.

CinemaSF is hosting a free screening of the film on January 8 at the Vogue Theatre. Email adam@cinemasf.com with "Stan and Ollie" in the subject line and indicate whether you want one or two tickets. (Two is the limit.) The film opens at the Clay Theatre on Fillmore on January 11.

At the Clay, a Dark But Brilliant Film

BY IAN BERKE

ZAIN IS A skinny, handsome, 12-year-old boy living in the Beirut slums, barely being raised by his poor, not very functional drug dealing parents, along with at least four other siblings, including his 11-year-old sister, Sahar, whom he adores and cares for. Zain does not go to school because his parents need the money he earns working in a small shop. Zain, although hardened and with a foul mouth, is a survivor, with the survival skills essential in his chaotic world. He decides to sue his parents, claiming he should never have been born. The case makes it to court and attracts tremendous attention.

Capernaum — now showing at the Clay Theatre on Fillmore — opens with an aerial shot of Beirut, showing the characteristic round-cornered mid-rise apartment buildings with flat roofs that contain their own world. It is a labyrinth of streets with tangles of wires everywhere. We first see Zain as a doctor is examining him, asking his age, which he doesn't really know. Then we are in a courtroom, with Zain in handcuffs, being asked if he knows why he is there. He does, having tried to kill a man — a "sonofabitch," according to Zain.

The courtroom scenes frame Zain's struggles to survive. He begs for food and a job at a restaurant, where he meets an Ethiopian cleaning woman, working illegally, who takes him home. She has a 2-year-old boy and Zain becomes his babysitter, coping with situations that would tax an adult. Ultimately we see that cute but very sad shot, used in the advertisements, of Zain pulling the baby through the streets in a big pot taped to a skateboard. Zain may have the body of a skinny kid, but he has the heart of a lion.

The story is dark. The Lebanese director, Nadine Labaki, has given us a Middle Eastern version of the French New Wave's *The 400 Blows*, in color and fully as powerful and poignant. Parts of *Capernaum* are painful to watch as Zain fights to feed himself and the baby. The acting is astonishing, even though all of the actors are non-professional. Zain's acting in particular is nothing short of brilliant, but in an understated way. *Capernaum* is a great film that will become a classic.

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Laurel Hill Cemetery entrance gate and monuments.

By BRIDGET MALEY

IN 1940, after years of efforts to ban cemeteries in San Francisco, workers began exhuming bodies from the Laurel Hill Cemetery for reinterment outside the city limits. The cemetery occupied a large site bounded by California Street on the north, Presidio and Parker at the east and west and an angled edge along the southern boundary. A landscape of meandering paths and ornate headstones and mausoleums, Laurel Hill was a picturesque, park-like final resting place for the city's most influential residents.

After the cemetery was removed, a large portion of the site was prepared for new housing developed by Heyman Brothers, an established residential developer in the city since the 1890s. Single-family, split-level, wood-frame, stuccoed houses with attached garages and varying architectural ornament popped up quickly in the new neighborhood. Side-by-side duplexes; two, three and four flats; and small-scale apartment buildings rounded out the housing selection.

Construction of the intended 600 units, originally conceived of as Mayfair Terrace, was delayed when World War II broke out. The neighborhood eventually became known as Laurel Heights, in homage to the old cemetery, and the accompanying commercial strip along California Street was called Laurel Village. One of the residential streets just south of the shopping center became Mayfair Drive. Buildout of the new residential enclave finally began in 1947 and was about 75 percent complete within two years.

A 12-acre section at the northeast

corner of the former cemetery remained undeveloped. The San Francisco Unified School District purchased those lots, but ultimately decided not to build on them. A small portion at the northwest intersection of Masonic and Bush became a city firehouse. After much debate and some controversy, the last vestiges of old cemetery lands were rezoned for commercial use and purchased by Fireman's Fund Insurance for a new corporate campus.

The Fireman's Fund was a venerable San Francisco institution that grew into a global presence after World War II. Its first headquarters burned in 1906, but was rebuilt and became a longstanding Financial District landmark, with the firm eventually expanding to multiple downtown buildings. However, evolving business practices and a desire for a more consolidated campus combined to make the Laurel Heights property desirable to the insurance company. It purchased the site from the school district in March 1953.

The Fireman's Fund looked to local Modernist architect Edward B. Page, whose father, Charles R. Page, happened to be the chair of its board of directors. The younger Page had completed several smaller projects for the company, earning the trust of the broader leadership. He assembled a team that included Eckbo, Royston & Williams, landscape architects; Gould & Degenkolb, structural engineers; and Maurice Sands, interior decorator, among others. By June 1955, the team submitted plans to the city for review.

The main office building, reflecting the International Style, featured large expanses of glass accented by red brick, and was

When a Cemetery Became an Office Park

The story of 3333 California Street, now slated for another transformation



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Vintage aerial photograph of the newly developed Fireman's Fund Insurance Company headquarters, with the eastern portion of Laurel Village shopping center at lower left.

three to seven stories tall. Situated at the site's center and built into the hillside, with several radiating wings, these design features minimized the presence and scale of the building. Landscaped outdoor areas, including terraces, patios, lawns, planting beds, gardens and arbors, are interspersed among the various wings of the complex. Some mature trees, remnants of the cemetery, were retained in the site plan. Landscaped parking areas were concentrated along California Street, separated by a mid-block entry drive. The red brick detailing of the building spilled into the landscape, with brick used as paving, in low barriers, as planting boxes and at perimeter walls.

Corporate America fully embraced the International Style after World War II. The 1932 publication of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *The International Style*, detailing their Museum of Modern Art exhibition, had set the stage. The style's

clean lines, limited ornamentation and heavy use of glass appealed to both corporate and industrial designers.

It also appealed to the medical industry. In San Francisco, Erich Mendelsohn's Maimonides Health Center and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Mount Zion Hospital, both constructed in 1950, were nearby precursors to Page's Fireman's Fund campus.

The September 1957 edition of *Architect & Engineer* featured a cover story on the complex, particularly singling out the landscaping: "This includes 110 varieties of trees, plants and ground cover that give the area surrounding the building a park-like aspect." The French architectural periodical *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* also highlighted Page's corporate campus. The completed project is by far the architect's most celebrated work. It also reflects the growing importance of collaborative efforts between architect and landscape architect in large-scale suburban corporate development.

Page's architectural training was rooted in the Beaux Arts, and he spent time in Paris while traveling in Europe in 1930. However, during this period, Page was exposed to the growing influence of Modernism. In a late life interview, he recalled: "We were all rebels. Well into the Modern world of architecture, sneering at the Beaux Arts."

However, upon returning to San Francisco, Page worked for three of the city's most influential Beaux Arts architects — Arthur Brown Jr., John Bakewell Jr. and Lewis Hobart — before starting his own office after World War II. Beginning with small projects and culminating in the Laurel Heights Campus, Page's primary client was the Fireman's Fund. He designed subsequent additions to the site in the mid-1960s, as well as branch offices throughout California and consulted on other company outposts throughout the country.

In 1985, the site became the UCSF

Laurel Heights campus. Recently, the State Historical Resources Commission voted unanimously to list the property on the National Register of Historic Places and has forwarded the nomination to the National Park Service for concurrence.

A pending development project has been proposed at the site, 3333 California Street, to accommodate new housing and retail space. The project has members of the Laurel Heights Neighborhood Association concerned about traffic, parking and the impact on historic resources at the site. While the proposed project would retain a portion of Page's original office building, it would also insert a dense collection of new buildings, altering the relationship of buildings to landscape and garden.

Special thanks to historians Michael Corbett and Denise Bradley, whose National Register nomination greatly informed this article.



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To read about the Program's requirements and your next steps, visit sfdbi.org/businessentrance.

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Charles Gracie Opens New Martial Arts Academy in Outer Richmond

Grand Opening on January 12th!

Charles Gracie, grandson of the founder of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, a Coral Belt 7th Degree in the art, is opening his newest Academy in the Richmond District.



The early ancestor of jiu-jitsu was brought from Japan to the Gracie Family in Brazil and it evolved via family dedication and study, as well as refined, through trial and error, into what became known as Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. This means that students in his schools acquire the benefit of the Art his family developed in its purest form.

Master Charles Gracie and his head instructors Mark and Alex d'Ercole, father and son, San Francisco natives, with 14 years experience and Richmond District residents since 1993, are thrilled to be bringing this established Academy to the Richmond District community.

The Richmond academy will be offering a unique approach with both the traditional group classes and, also, a large spectrum of skills training via private lessons from certified instructors in a number of martial arts, including stand-up skills and wrestling. They will also be offering unique early morning conditioning classes for adults.

To celebrate the grand opening, the Charles Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy is having a Grand Opening Ceremony on Saturday, Jan. 12th. Please check out our new training facility or inquire about the programs we offer.

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2569 Post St	2	2	1	1,190	11	11/16/2018	1,095,000	1,310,000
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2295 Vallejo St #310	2	2	1	1,185	52	11/30/2018	1,599,000	1,390,000
3042 California St	3	2	1	1,446	34	11/26/2018	1,495,000	1,495,000
3479 Sacramento St	2	1	1	1,435	12	12/5/2018	1,450,000	1,530,000
3044 California St	4	3	1	n/a	19	11/26/2018	1,795,000	1,850,000
2021 Green St	3	2	1	1,372	33	11/27/2018	1,895,000	1,935,000
282 Pixley St	2	2	1	n/a	22	12/6/2018	1,788,000	2,000,000
3036 Pierce St	2	2	1	n/a	13	12/4/2018	1,695,000	2,000,000
1980 Vallejo St #2	4	3	2	n/a	61	12/4/2018	3,495,000	3,200,000



A rebalancing of the market

Although the number of properties for sale in the neighborhood increased only slightly in the late fall from the same time a year ago, prices dropped significantly. That trend is in line with an overall rebalancing of the housing market throughout the Bay Area.

In November, there were 129 single family homes and condominiums for sale in Lower Pacific Heights, Pacific Heights, Presidio Heights and Cow Hollow, — five more than a year ago. Yet the median sales price declined by more than 30 percent, from \$1.99 million in November 2017 to \$1.36 million last year, the lowest recorded price level during the past two years. Buyers are finally gaining some leverage, with more homes listed and prices relaxing.

One example of this trend is 2100 Broadway (above), a six-bedroom home at the corner of Buchanan Street that sold shortly before Thanksgiving. Originally priced at \$17.8 million, the home lingered on the market for about seven months. Eventually the price was reduced by more than \$6 million before a buyer emerged.

— 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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Students in the main hallway at Gateway High School. Below, the main entrance to Gateway High at Geary and Scott, for many years the Benjamin Franklin Middle School.

A Different Way to Learn

Gateway schools celebrate 20 years of educating students who learn differently

By FRAN MORELAND JOHNS

“**B**E TRUTHFUL, GENTLE and FEARLESS” proclaims a sign on the office wall of Sharon Olken, executive director of Gateway School at Geary and Scott.

Olken first came to Gateway in 2000, teaching humanities. She served in a variety of positions, including dean of faculty and principal of Gateway High School. She launched Gateway Middle School in 2011. In recent months she has been busily involved in celebrations of Gateway’s 20th anniversary.

“Our mission has always been to serve a population of students that reflects the diversity of San Francisco, and help them understand how they learn best,” while building their academic skills, Olken says. “We added health support, literacy programs and electives, which have been very popular,” she says. “We want kids to thrive.”

Part of thriving, Olken says, is understanding racial bias and prejudice. “In training teachers, we’ve learned to start by understanding our own beliefs in order to create equitable outcomes for all kids,” she says.

About 75 percent of Gateway’s population is made up of students of color. And 96 percent of the group is college-bound, 40 percent of them the first generation of their families to attend college. Anyone can apply to Gateway, and a fulltime recruiter crisscrosses the city throughout the year encouraging applicants. Then — not good news for aspiring students — only about one quarter of those applying are accepted.

Some are accepted into other schools they’ve also applied to, and others are wait-listed and might be enrolled later. Acceptance is by lottery. A computer has replaced the humans who formerly pulled names out of a rotating drum, and diversity is achieved by giving priority on the basis of factors such as San Francisco residency, eligibility for free or reduced lunch and learning differences.

Olken explains that learning differences are not just the better-known conditions such as autism, ADD and ADHD, but an assortment of other things including dysgraphia, dyscalcula and auditory processing disorder. Gateway was founded to address exactly such needs, and is dedicated to helping students discover how they learn best. About a quarter of the student population has been diagnosed with learning differences.

Olken explains that charter schools — Gateway Middle and High Schools are among the 15 charters that are part of the San Francisco Unified School District — all receive a measure of freedom from rules governing regular public schools, but must meet all state laws and also have site and community oversight



Six moms and a dad

It was 20 years ago that a group of San Franciscans — “six moms and a dad,” according to founding principal Peter Thorp — saw a need for a school tailored to serving students with learning differences. And Gateway High School was founded.

The effort had actually started two years earlier, when the group went from discussing the need to seeing an answer and applying for a multitude of permits. “They had this ‘What Hath God Wrought’ moment,” Thorp says. “Suddenly they needed a building, and a principal — and that’s where I came in.”

The idea was to address a citywide need. Some of the founders sent their own children to Gateway and some did not. “There were so many kids with learning differences,” says founder and board member Suzanne Schutte. “We had an opportunity to bring this experience to all of these kids. That it actually happened is amazing.”

by the district. They must also be re-certified every five years.

Charter schools — thrust into public discourse when charter advocate Betsy DeVos was named U.S. Secretary of Education — do not lack for dedicated opponents, though most of them focus on for-profit charters, which are widely seen to siphon off assets and good students.

Gateway High founding principal Peter Thorp, now working in public education in New Mexico, observes: “There are good guys and bad guys among charter schools, and 90 percent are good guys.”

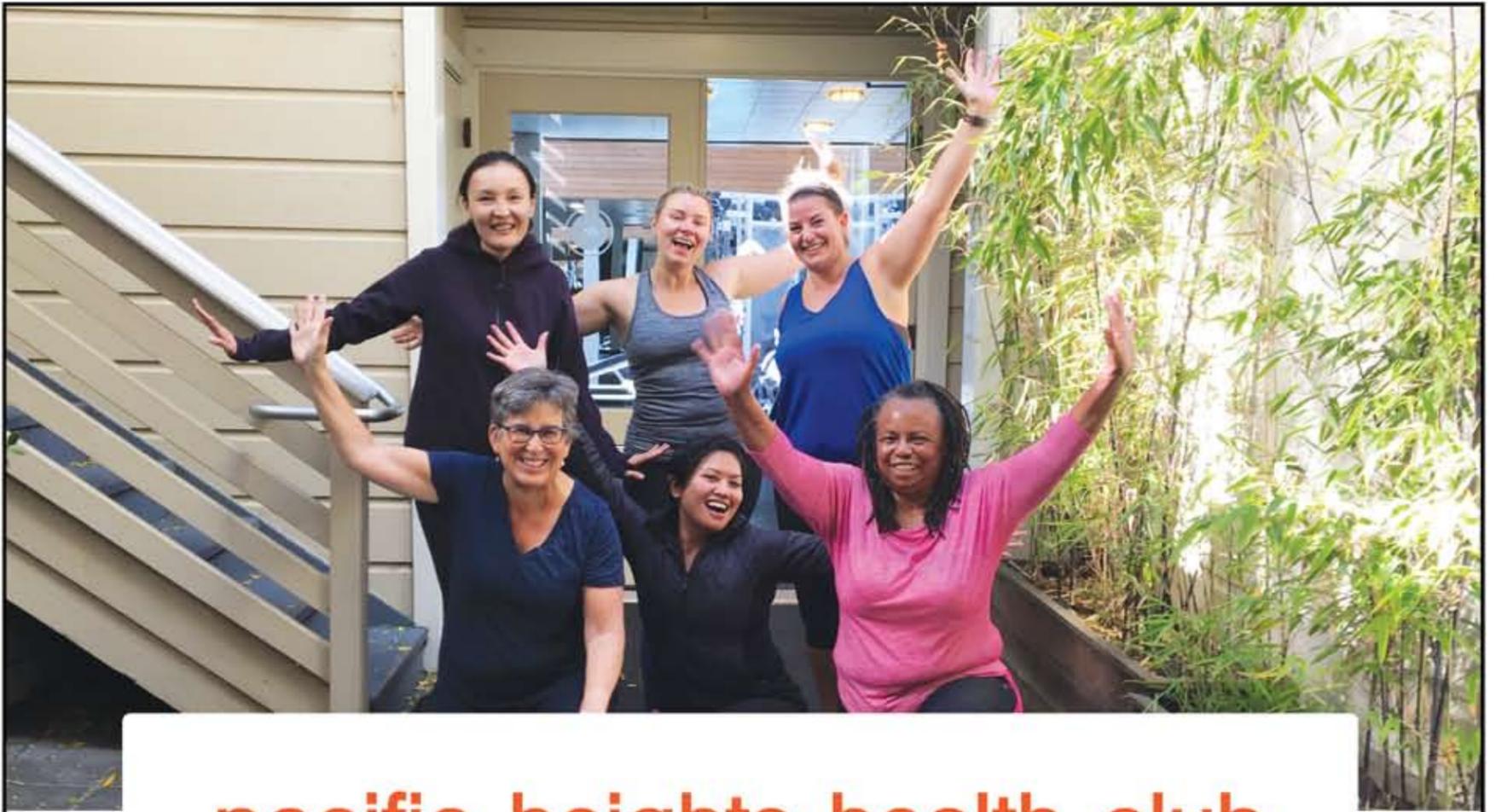
School board member Rachel Norton, who has concerns about “the slanted playing field between charters and traditional public schools,” nevertheless expresses deep respect for Olken and declares Gateway schools are “excellent public schools.” Gateway founder and board member Suzanne Schutte says: “What’s been really cool is that we are laboratories, able to share what we’ve learned.”

Gateway’s first location was at the corner of Jackson and Webster, in the building that now houses San Francisco’s Montessori Public School. It soon moved from there to Seventh Avenue near Irving Street and, in 2005, moved again to the corner of Scott Street and Geary Boulevard — the site of the former Benjamin Franklin Middle School, which had closed because of declining enrollment.

“We finally have found a home,” Olken says. “Ben Franklin had been extraordinarily vibrant at its height, and we feel a responsibility to that. Our location is central and easily accessible.” With a 24:1 student-teacher ratio, she is confident her schools are reaching the aspirational goal posted on her office wall as well as that posted on the website: “Step up. Do right. Dream big.”

Two students, sisters Ava and Rose Golant, recently offered their opinions on what it’s like to enter Gateway’s halls. Freshman Rose, whose favorite class is humanities, said that about half of her classmates came from Gateway Middle School, so a lot of people already knew each other. But she has made many new friends. Sixth grader Ava, who came to Gateway from George Peabody Elementary, agrees. “It’s kind of like a small community,” she says, “and everybody is nice to each other. I tripped in the hall, and an 8th grader helped me up.”

Freshman Owen Popper, who completed three years at Gateway Middle School before moving on to Gateway High, observes: “I chose to go to Gateway for two reasons. I was not accepted into the school that I wanted to go to, and I had seen Gateway and the way it worked. I thought it would be a good fit, and so far it seems that it is.”



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