

JUN - JUL 2017



# DUBOCE TRIANGLE NEWS

Hand-delivered to **3000** households and businesses bi-monthly

**Monday, June 12, 2017**

**7:00 to 9:00 pm**

## PUBLIC MEETING

CPMC Davies Campus, Gazebo Room  
(outside, ground-level entrance in plaza  
between North and South towers)

### MEETING AGENDA:

- Meet your neighbors (7:00 - 7:30)
- Presiding Judge Teri L. Jackson and Assistant Presiding Judge Garrett Wong of the San Francisco County Superior Court: Judiciary's Role in the Administration of Justice
- Supervisor Jeff Sheehy: Respite Center at 100 Church, Update

Recently, San Francisco's judiciary has been in the news, with some judges taking criticism for overly lenient sentencing, while another judge threw out thousands of warrants for people accused of quality-of-life crimes who failed to appear on those charges. Come to DTNA's community forum on June 12 and hear directly from judges about their role in the justice system, sentencing guidelines and philosophy, and more. Bring your questions!

### DATES TO REMEMBER:

Saturday, June 10, 10 am - noon  
Friends of Duboce Park Volunteer Day. Contact Rose at [rose@friendsofdubocepark.org](mailto:rose@friendsofdubocepark.org) or 415-255-8370.

Saturday, July 8, 10 am - noon  
Friends of Duboce Park Volunteer Day. Contact Rose at [rose@friendsofdubocepark.org](mailto:rose@friendsofdubocepark.org) or 415-255-8370.

## Homelessness in the Triangle – What's Been Tried, What May Be Next...



*Randy Quezada of the Department of Homelessness and Support Housing says the Department is trying to make homelessness a "rare, brief, and one time occurrence."*

When the City Controller's office released its biennial survey in early May, which measures San Francisco residents' satisfaction with everything from government and parks to infrastructure, the survey showed, not surprisingly, that residents continue to be most concerned about homelessness (33 percent). In order to answer some questions about what is being done about this continued concern, Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association asked Randy Quezada, Communications and Community Relations Manager at the newly created Department of Homelessness and Support Housing, to our April 10 DTNA General

Meeting. A lively discussion ensued, with thought-provoking questions from the audience.

Mr. Quezada explained that his department, which officially launched in July of 2016, was created with the goal of establishing a single tracking system to monitor homeless people by putting the 60 organizations that deal with homelessness under one roof. Before, services were happening in a patchwork way and there was no website to check progress of an individual. The new system allows the City to assign a score

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City Hall Update: Supervisor Jeff Sheehy



Jeff Sheehy  
San Francisco District 8 Supervisor

When one thinks of the most inclusive, welcoming, and progressive city in the United States, it's hard not to think of San Francisco as number one. As a result of that positive sentiment in contrast with the stark negative of a presidential administration advocating hate and discrimination, San Francisco now finds itself as ground zero for LGBTQ youth across the country, who are fleeing from conservative bastions due to the fear of abuse and violence. I recently spoke with one such youth, D. Andrew Porter, a queer activist from Kentucky, who fled to San Francisco after receiving death threats following the election. Finding it impossible to navigate the labyrinthine maze of city services and hearing horror stories of theft and violence towards youth at city shelters, Porter ended up couch-surfing and sleeping in an unheated industrial garage before eventually securing a studio apartment with four roommates. Unfortunately, many young people in similar positions to Porter never find a place to live and

end up among the chronically homeless. These youth are at a high risk of falling victim to predators or developing substance abuse problems, which contributes to the petty crime and unclean streets we see too often in our neighborhoods.

The most recent Point In Time

count showed that nearly one in five homeless individuals are youth, that nearly half identify as LGBTQ, and that and 13% are HIV+. As a gay man living with HIV and the father of a twelve-year-old daughter, I'm committed to finding ways to help the homeless youth on our streets. I believe that by doing this, we will also be able to tackle interrelated issues like substance abuse and crime that consume a vast amount of city resources. In an attempt to understand the problem and potential solutions, I asked a number of departments to report on their efforts and arranged for a public hearing on Youth Homelessness that was held at City Hall on May 10th. What we learned is that the City has failed to allocate enough resources to combat youth homelessness, and that the young often have difficulty navigating the steps to receive help from organizations. While I know there is no silver bullet to solving this crisis, I do believe that our current approach can be improved.

One solution currently being explored, with the support of Castro Merchants and Castro neighbors, is a Respite Center modeled after the successful North Beach Citizens program. The goal would be to bring homeless youth in off the streets and create an access point to city services and pathway to treatment and housing. Both the concept and location are open to discussion with the community, and nothing is going forward until everyone is heard. I encourage the public to participate in the process and my office will keep you updated as solutions are vetted and proposed. As a Supervisor, gay man, and father, I think it's time to remind the rest of the country what it means to be a city that's pragmatic and compassionate.

In the same vein of keeping our streets safe and clean, I am committed to keeping our commercial corridors thriving for local businesses. A recent Hoodline article noted that there are 53 empty storefronts in the Castro, which equates to a 12.8% vacancy rate. What's going on? A recent survey conducted by the Castro Merchants highlighted that one of the biggest barriers to new businesses opening is in the "planning, building inspection, and permitting process." Oftentimes, new businesses must wait months on end for the various approvals, while still paying rent which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars. My office is currently working with local stakeholders, including the Castro Benefits

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Our Streetscape



Pat Tura  
DTNA Treasurer

One of the key elements that makes the Duboce Triangle such a lovely place to live is our long-standing commitment to creating a sustainable streetscape. Our streetscape plays an important role in forming the visual image of our neighborhood, creates retail and residential value, and, perhaps most importantly, provides a platform for social interaction and engagement.

Running through the heart of the Triangle is the beautiful tree-lined Noe Street, with its built-in seating that creates an enjoyable space for pedestrians. The quaint street corner at Henry Street is home to the

who in addition to providing blossoms at reasonable prices, tied off with warm words and a smile, also helps maintain the greenery in his area. All along Noe Street, from Market Street to the Duboce Park, your neighbors have greenscaped sidewalks with a wide variety of planters, adding color, texture and interest to the streetscape. It is inviting, lively and neighborly. We used to have the free library, which vandals kept destroying until it no longer exists; but of course, they are part of our streetscape too.

For a more modern look, turn down 15th Street toward Sanchez Street, where, thanks to DTNA advocacy, we have re-

charming French Bistro L'Ardoise, with a giant velvet drape that creates a cozy environment in the urban jungle, and which looks out on a mini-Japanese landscape created in a very large circular pot, surrounded by well-maintained benches. Down the street at 15th Street and Noe Street is Guy, the Flower Guy,

cently added new street "bulb-outs" at Sanchez Street and Market Street, increasing pedestrian space and creating a safe opportunity for social interactions. The new benches, plantings, bike racks, and permeable pavement, fronting the new "The Duboce" apartment complex are thoughtfully and artistically designed, and will hopefully wear well as the benchescape on Noe Street.

It is a reality that new surfaces bring out the taggers, but the apartment manager, Greystar, has been vigilant about reversing their handiwork, and of course the taggers too are a part of our streetscape.

Each Wednesday, the Farmers' Market connects people and vitalizes the corner of Noe Street and Market Street; and pedestrians are safe there, for one afternoon at least. The market transforms our neighborhood into a gathering place where food is the central reason we congregate. But we are also there to greet our neighbors and friends from other neighborhoods as well, who love our market and stop in to enjoy Noe Street and the surrounding area. The vendor stalls offer a moment's respite from the hurried urban atmosphere.

Our diverse streetscape in the Duboce Triangle also includes an eclectic retail environment, from Market Street in the South to Waller Street in the North. Upper Market Street is the home of retail and entertainment establishments, and we have noticed that while 'formula retail' like Bank of the West and the now-defunct CVS have not fared well, food has. Super Duper has a loyal

following of diverse neighbors and is expanding; the lively and delicious Spanish restaurant Canela has been going strong for several years now, and we have recently added the inspiring Japanese restaurant Nomi-ca, so, how lucky are we?

Duboce Park, near the Southern border of our Triangle, offers a wide-open green space, a basketball court, a dog play area, a playground and even a zen-inspired labyrinth on Scott Street. Do not forget, Duboce Park was a tent city after the 1906 earthquake, sheltering displaced residents from all over the city.

In this diverse streetscape, we can never ignore the fact that we have people living on the streets in tents, mentally ill persons wandering endlessly, and drug addicts shooting up whenever and wherever they can. They are part of our streetscape too, and remind us that not everyone has the opportunity to go into our restaurants for dinner, or can set up a planter in their shopping carts to add color and texture to our neighborhood. The homeless are as much a part of our streetscape as the street corners, the market and the park. Some say they keep the tourists and shoppers away. Some merchants complain that their drop in business is low because of safety concerns linked to homelessness. But until the mayor's office or the Board of Supervisors have the political will to execute their fine-sounding plans for affordable and supportive housing, these people will continue to be a part of our streetscape, and are our neighbors too.

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## Cannabis in the Triangle – What’s Next?

California voters took a big step towards normalizing marijuana use by passing Proposition 215 in 1996, which decriminalized possession of small amounts of pot, and legalized medical marijuana. Here in the Duboce Triangle neighborhood, the only major change as a result of Proposition 215, besides the increased likelihood of walking through a pungent cloud on the street, was the addition of a successful and socially responsible local business, The Apothecarium, which has occupied and well maintained two storefronts on Market Street, and contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to local philanthropic organizations since they opened ten years ago.

What is next? Californians approved Proposition 64 last year, which is opening the gates to the purchase, possession, and consumption of marijuana in businesses licensed for that purpose. The first licenses will be granted in January 2018, so how many will be in our neighborhood, and of what sort?

One local entrepreneur who wants to give it a try is Terrance Alan, the new owner of Flore (formerly Café Flore), a long-time neighborhood institution at Noe Street and Market Street, that has been serving customers various delicious foods and drinks in the former pharmacy of the Finnilla Family Baths since 1973. Alan explained that this location was a logical decision for his business: “it has been an LGBT community space for 45 years and was the initial place where Dennis Peron met with Brownie Mary to discuss the beneficial effects of cannabis on what was then known as the gay cancer [later AIDS].”

Alan has owned the cafe for four months and has left the cafe space virtually the same as it has been for a long time. Significant upgrades have been made to the kitchen space in a separate building across Noe Street. Alan tells us that the Flore will continue to be the social cafe everyone loves, and promises that any changes will be done with the spirit of improving customer experience without compromise.

The move-in and subsequent operation has

been a smooth process; he met with neighbors and nearby businesses and has been welcomed by the community. In mid-June, Flore will introduce a new “High Happy Hour” menu that will include cannabis-infused beer, cocktails, and “munchie” snacks. The products will contain the ‘CBD’ part of cannabis, but not the ‘THC’ part, as there is no legal way to serve that right now. This will make Flore the first non-dispensary in San Francisco to sell cannabis goods for on-site consumption. Alan says that Flore is not looking to become a dispensary, but instead to offer a food and dining experience with cannabis.

Whether or not this will encourage other cannabis-related businesses to open in the area is unclear, as legislation is still being shaped by the City Board of Supervisors; there is a lot of unknown in this transitional period about what will be permitted and where. Flore and its kitchen across the

street are not in what is casually referred to as the ‘green zone’. Marijuana businesses must be at least 1,000 feet from a ‘sensitive use’ such as a school, and Flore is too close to both Sanchez and McKinley Elementary schools for that to work. However, any current requirements could change with the Cannabis Task Force’s recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, which is currently working on finalizing licensing rules.

As they continue to settle in, Alan encourages everyone to visit Flore and continue to help them make it the best community experience that they can. He is also open to questions via e-mail at [Terrance@flore415.com](mailto:Terrance@flore415.com). If you’d like to voice a neighborly sentiment (pro or con) on the prospective use, you can weigh in at our monthly Land Use Committee meetings, or leave a comment on our website at <http://www.dtna.org/>.

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## DTNA Board Supports Sheehy’s “Chop Shop” Legislation

Perhaps you have seen them? A group of unsavory gentlemen gathered on a street corner, busily adding to a pile of bikes in various stages of disassemble, offering their wares for sale to passers-by? Are they itinerant bike repairmen, salvaging discarded and unwanted materials, and offering services to the biking public? Or is there something more nefarious going on?

Thanks to our new District 8 Supervisor Jeff Sheehy, we will hopefully soon have the opportunity to find out. At the February 28 City Board of Supervisors meeting, Sheehy introduced legislation to prohibit the operation of these so-called “chop shops”. The legislation authorizes the police “to seize any bicycles or bicycle parts from persons who operate chop shops.” The legislation prohibits assembling, disassembling, selling or distributing on public property bicycle parts, if the operation includes five or more bicycles, a bicycle frame with gear cables or brake cables cut, three or more bicycles with missing parts such as handlebars, wheels, forks or pedals, or five or more bicycle parts. If a police officer comes upon a “chop shop” operation, the officer would be empowered to write a citation, similar to a parking ticket, and seize the items in violation of the law. If the items are confiscated, the officer would

have to provide the date and location on the citation, along with a description of the item and how they can be recovered. A person who has their items seized can retrieve the items if they can prove they are the rightful owner of them. “A person shall be deemed the ‘rightful owner’ if the person can demonstrate with sufficient reliability that he or she is the lawful owner of the seized item, for example, by providing video or photographic evidence indicating ownership of the seized item, by producing a bill of sale, by correctly stating the serial number, or by signing a sworn affidavit in person at an SFPD location,” the legislation says.

“Right now the police do not have clear authority to address chop shops,” Sheehy explained. He also emphasized that he did not want the proposal to “criminalize our most vulnerable,” pointing out that the legislation “does not allow people to be thrown in jail, but simply allows police to pick up the parts and make sure that the bikes get back to the rightful owners.” Under the proposed bill, victims of bike theft may be able to reclaim their stolen items from San Francisco Police Department, if they provide proof that they are the lawful owner. The hope is that by



Chop Shop?

reducing the incentives to acquire stolen merchandise, we can make a dent in the current egregiously high level of bike theft in our city.

“My first job here in San Francisco when I moved here in the early 1990s was as a bicycle messenger,” Sheehy adds. “I barely scraped by, but my bicycle allowed me to survive. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen piles of bikes and bike parts on our sidewalks. As someone who gets around primarily by foot and by public transportation, I see these operations all the time. When I got to the Board a few months ago, I was shocked to hear that the police currently have very little recourse to address these enterprises.”

At its May Board meeting, the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association Board of Directors voted unanimously to support Supervisor Sheehy’s legislation. If you’d like to add your voice in support (or in opposition) leave a message on the DTNA website at [www.dtna.org](http://www.dtna.org).

You can help prevent your bicycle being stolen by securely locking it whenever it is not in use, including a sturdy chain through the front wheel. You should also take a picture of your bike, and register it at the SAFE Bikes web site, [www.sfsafe.org](http://www.sfsafe.org), so that if your bike is stolen, it can be identified and returned to you if found. The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition has an excellent guide on their web site. Roll on!





Can They Tear It Down?

Most neighbors have a story about one beloved building that they walked by each day, only to find on one sad occasion that it was gone. Often the process involves the removal of everything behind the façade, which stands bleak and lonely for a time. Then the façade goes too, and a new building, glassy and boxy, rises in its place, leaving one to wonder, “Can they even do that? Is that legal?”

In answer to your query, many years ago, in order to help define the difference between an outright demolition and a remodel, or an alteration, the San Francisco Planning Department came up with a set of guidelines that are called “Tantamount to Demolition” (Section 317 of the Planning Code). The code states that a “remodel” is considered a demolition if: there is removal of 50% of the sum of the front and rear facades; 50% of the vertical and horizontal elements; AND 65% of the sum of the exterior walls.

Developers have been unhappy with this part of the Code since it has been difficult to assess if their project falls somewhere on the border, a determination which is made by Planning Staff. Neighboring residents were also unhappy, since housing character in any neighborhood was often diminished. And it was a limited tool for the Planning Department itself, since it has been difficult to assess exactly how much of the original building has been removed.

Because of all this, the Planning Department recently decided to completely redo this section of the Code and rename it “Residential Expansion Threshold” (RET). If this RET is adopted, the Planning Department would no longer be discussing remodels or demolitions. They would look at any proposed increase in size and determine the Floor Area Ratio; basically measuring the proposed, remodeled home against the size of the lot. If the project proposal exceeds the acceptable square footage based on this method, the developer would need to seek a “Conditional Use Authorization” or CU, which involves a hearing before the Planning Commission, a difficult and often quite costly process.

Specific to the Duboce Triangle neighborhood, we live in a predominantly “RH-2” neighborhood, which stands for Residential Housing - 2 units. Imagine your neighbor’s cottage is a total of 1000 square feet, and that the lot is the common 2500 square feet (25' X 100'). A developer can “disappear” the cottage and replace it with 2 units that total 4500 square feet. This can basically be done over the counter, with no special hearing.

Usually one would think that in the process of completely revising a document with the intention of improving it, the Planning Department would consider the most common complaint about “remodels”:

that the charming character of a neighborhood is disappearing as more and more of these projects glide through the approval process. You have seen it many times before, what was a nice old A-frame house is gutted and replaced with a boxy, taller structure that looks as though it would fit in well on some South of Market alley, but not on my block! Unfortunately, the Planning Department’s initial proposal did not address preserving neighborhood character.

Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association’s Land Use Committee has been working closely with those leading the revision, and we are hoping we can have a positive effect. Our recommendation was simply to include the following wording: All attempts should be made to preserve older building facades in order to retain character and context with existing neighboring structures.

We will keep you posted. The Planning Commission will be hearing this on June 1st. If you would like to weigh in, you can attend the hearing, or you can call the Planning Department at (415) 558-6378. We will be reviewing the results at our upcoming Land Use Committee meeting, June 5 at 7 p.m. at the Chase Bank at Sanchez Street and Market Street.

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VANGUARD PROPERTIES

10th Annual Dogfest, April 22, 2017, Duboce Park

Proceeds from Dogfest support McKinley school.

Proceeds from Dogfest support McKinley school. elegant scarves, jewelry, little jackets and even tiny shoes.

Dogs, dogs, dogs! Every breed and size, and all their favorite people, and a lot of other people all running around Duboce Park! Saturday April 22 was a beautiful day and quite a scene. Imagine dogs dressed up in costumes: a tiny dog as the flying nun, another dressed as a hippie in full tie-dye, and many others wearing hats, sunglasses, el-

There was something for everyone; samples galore of dog biscuits, treats and toys, booths with people eager to give canine advice and others eager to hear it; rescue dog adoption tents, a silent auction and great photo opportunities all day. An adult dressed in a bright red dog suit from head to toe, complete with long ears, could be seen having his picture taken with people of all ages. Duboce Park was packed.

A full row of games for children, and adults, along the Northern edge of the park included coconut bowling and a lollipop tree. The emcee's voice both

real and electronic was blaring along with music. Was everyone having fun? I definitely think so. As one little girl wearing a 10th anniversary Dogfest t-shirt, with her fluffy white dog in her arms said to me: “My dog and I, and my whole family, we look forward to this every year!”

Inevitable Change, continued


Continued from page 2

District, the Eureka Valley and Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Associations, and the Castro Merchants, to streamline the approval process to help attract businesses that will serve the local community. One bright (and sweet) spot of success is the recent opening of The Castro Fountain, which is serving up ice cream and delicious baked treats.

Finally, my office recently received a number of complaints about a generator on Hermann Street which was producing an excessive amount of noise through all hours of the day and night. We discovered that

a city project was underway and that electricity was not being received from PG&E, necessitating the need for the obtrusive generator. My office established contact with neighbors, held a meeting in the area to hear concerns, and coordinated a response with the Mayor’s Office of Housing and PG&E to re-energize the space to allow for the removal of the generator. We were able to expedite the re-energization and, as a result, the generator will be removed a week ahead of its original schedule. We are grateful to those members of the community who reached out and let us know about the problem.

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# San Francisco Fire Department Station 6

The San Francisco Fire Department Station 6 on Sanchez Street at Henry Street is one of the busiest stations in the city. Being centrally located, the fire fighters' emergency response skills are called on many times a day. Daily estimates include a minimum of one fire a day within the city coupled with the medical and other emergency services needed keep our local fire fighters and Station busy.

Normally, there are two fire companies housed at Station 6; however, currently there are more being housed than normal. Station 5, on Webster Street, is undergoing seismic improvements and the company from that station was transferred to Station 6, making a total of three companies. Between fire fighters, paramedics, and officers, there are 45 men and one female within those three companies. Of the two companies regularly housed at Station 6, all of the fire fighters volunteered to be at our neighborhood firehouse. Thus, they elected to become members of the Duboce Triangle. In fact, the captain of Station 6, Captain Joe Driscoll, grew up in the Mission neighborhood and played on a local basketball team.

The firefighters of Station 6 are essential members of the neighborhood and they are great neighbors! They regularly shop at many of the local establishments. They are known to frequent the hardware stores, dry cleaners, and they like to visit the Eureka Valley Library. And of course, when they are at Safeway responding to a service call, they often times take advantage of the opportunity to grab some groceries, too. In addition, the San Francisco Firefighters Union supports the Castro Street Merchants Association through contributions.

Due to the architecture of the firehouse building, it may appear that guests are not welcome. But that is the opposite of the truth. The men and women of Station 6 are always happy to talk with their neighbors. Many times, when the doors are open and the trucks are outside for cleaning or servicing, a conversation can easily be started and they always welcome questions. They even have little plastic fire fighter hats that they like to give to kids, but probably would give to anyone.

Keep a look out for one of the regular Open House and/or Safety Fairs. The next one is scheduled for the fall, exact date and time forthcoming. At these events, Station 6 is open and the neighborhood is invited inside to ogle the trucks, equipment, and the staff's residential area. There are safety classes available, such as fire prevention and education presentations, as well as instruction of hands only CPR. However, the live fire extinguisher demonstrations, in which visitors are

meant to handle the extinguisher, is quite possibly the most exciting part.

We are lucky to have a fire station in our neighborhood for ease of care and for what Station 6 provides for our community, and subsequently, our city. The men and women of Station 6 enjoy being a part of our community, too. We should all make sure to be a neighborly with them whenever we have the opportunity. You just may get a plastic fire-fighter hat!

The Duboce Triangle News is published at the beginning of February, April, June, August, October and December by the Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association (DTNA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

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# Homelessness in the Triangle, continued

Continued from page 1

to homeless persons, with the sickest and the neediest getting help most quickly, and the information is available to all the agencies and organizations involved.

Mr. Quezada said the Department is trying to make homelessness a "rare, brief, and one time occurrence," a very challenging task. Over 6,700 homeless people were counted during the last City census in January 2017, a number that has remained about the same for the past ten years, although 10,000-14,000 people may "touch" the system in any given year.

San Francisco has about 1,200 shelter beds for single adults available on any given night, plus a few hundred more at the City's navigation centers. About 95% of those beds are in use every night. A few hundred more beds are in the pipeline with a goal of 1,800-2,000 beds total. There is a 30-day wait list for shelter beds, and

about 850 people sign up each month.

Many people on the street refuse services being offered. Mr. Quezada said that the Department will keep offering them services, but it may take 9-10 interactions to get someone's trust. The Encampment Resolution Team (ERT) team, created last summer, is designed to resolve the largest, most entrenched encampments, usually six tents or more, often by placing people in the Mission Street Navigation Center.

Mr. Quezada said Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT) work with SFPD, Public Works, and Animal Care and Control and with the Civic Center Navigation Center. They focus on people with a long history of living the streets. They will meet with people in a particular encampment for 3-4 weeks. Many people in encampments don't make good choices, some are sick, some are mentally ill, and some are on drugs.

San Francisco's first Navigation Center opened in March 2105 at 1950 Mission Street and 16th Street, and is designed to help homeless people, many living in encampments, who have stayed out of shelters because they do not want to be separated from a partner, friends, or even their dog, to find permanent housing. A second Navigation Center opened at the Civic Center Hotel at 20 12th Street. Three new Navigation Centers will be opened later this year in the Central Waterfront neighborhood, in the South of Market neighborhood, and at the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital.

An article in the March 26 San Francisco Chronicle said that "on any given night, there are 75 to 100 homeless camps in San Francisco" and an accompanying map showed the largest concentrations of encampments were located in the Mission neighborhood, the Dogpatch neighborhood, and the Design District.

Since March 2015, Navigation Centers have served 1,179 people and 72 percent have exited to a shelter, housing, or reunited with loved ones, according to an article Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing Chair Jeff Kositsky wrote for the Chronicle on January 31. About 25 percent of those entering the Centers move on to permanent supportive housing. Hundreds of people have returned home through the Homeward Bound program, which provides a bus ticket for qualified individuals.

"We need to help people with care and compassion," Mr.

Quezada said. "We can't give up on people, especially those who relapse. SRO's and permanent housing don't offer the chance to be with established friends. We need community spaces and places to socialize."

Supervisor Jeff Sheehy is considering what he is calling a "respite center" in the Castro neighborhood, possibly at the old Out of the Closet store at the corner of Church Street and Duboce Avenue. The center would be modeled after the homeless resource center operated by North Beach Citizens. Homeless people would be able to get food and shelter during the day and connect to services. This proposal may get pushback from a neighborhood that loudly opposed a proposed sex offender rehab clinic at that location in February 2016.

Sheehy said in an e-mail to DTNA that "both the concept and location for a respite are under discussion. Nothing is going forward until everyone is heard and there is full discussion. The CBD, Castro Merchants and some Castro neighborhood people are asking for a respite center." He said in his Supervisor's Column in this issue of the DTNA News that the goal would be bring homeless youth in off the streets.

Sheehy will be at our June 12 General Meeting to talk more about his proposal. He encourages "the public to participate in the process." You can email him at [Jeff.Sheehy@sfgov.org](mailto:Jeff.Sheehy@sfgov.org).

la Mediterranée



288 Noe St. at Market  
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# Working Group on Retail Vacancies Sees Hopeful Signs Amid Local, National and International Trends

The Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District (CBD), and the Castro Merchants organizations are in ongoing discussions about how to reduce the retail vacancy rate in the Castro, Upper Market, and Duboce Triangle neighborhoods. These areas combined have an occupancy rate of about 87 percent, which would be considered high in many cities in the U.S. and abroad, but is significantly lower than the San Francisco citywide rate of 97 percent (which is one of the highest in the country).

Local TV News ABC 7 did a feature on the problem on March 17 and a Hoodline article on March 20 highlighted what it calculated as the 12.8 percent vacancy rate in the Castro. They counted about 53 empty storefronts now compared to 33 vacancies in 2015, out of 412 total

commercial properties in our district.

The Castro & Upper Market Retail Strategy study, a cooperative effort of the above organizations, linked property owners, neighborhood groups, and merchant groups to fill the vacancies. But despite our best efforts the vacancy rate has not changed much since the study was published two years ago. However, it is worth noting that one reason for this is the recent boom in residential construction, which usually includes new ground-floor retail spaces (such as the Duboce building), some of which are now in discussions with various potential tenants.

The CBD formed the Castro & Upper Market Retail Strategy Steering Committee in October 2016 as part of Phase 2 of the Retail Strategy to help implement the Strategy and reduce the number of vacancies. They hired a re-

tail consultant, Jason Luger, to work specifically on the retail vacancy problem.

In interviews with businesses, real estate brokers, and landlords, Luger found that rent was the key issue mentioned most often. Landlords typically increase rents as leases expire, making it difficult for some merchants to renew. Furthermore, not all local landlords have done normal maintenance or made necessary repairs, creating more startup costs to new retailers who must make costly improvements or build-outs to a space before opening. Construction costs are at an all-time high. Most landlords have refused to accept what they assume are below market rents, or allow tenants a break during delays. Of course, what is “below market”, if the rent you are asking results in an empty space?

City and neighborhood approvals and permits is probably the

second biggest barrier to entry for tenants. Delays as long as two years and a cumbersome inspection and permitting process were also mentioned frequently as being very frustrating and the cause of additional expenses, especially when a space sits empty while rent is being paid. Realtors have reported that rules and regulations are not always as clear as they should be and permits must be obtained from a variety of departments rather than having “one-stop shopping.” Successful new businesses generally mentioned that they would not have even considered entering the neighborhood if they needed ‘change of use’ permits or significant capital investment in the spaces themselves. DTNA has spoken to our Supervisor Jeff Sheehy about streamlining the permitting process.

In addition, sadly, any small businesses are not aware of the city services available to

# Retail Vacancies, continued

them. There is poor coordination among city departments, which can result in costly delays. Luger prepared a list of several San Francisco departments, as well as some non-profits and community lenders, that can help both new and established businesses. DTNA believes it would be very helpful if the Office of Economic and Workforce Development had an accelerated process to assist small restaurants, and if there was a dedicated person at City Hall to help small businesses through the process. This is important, since few of the businesses surveyed were aware of these resources (and some said it would have made a huge difference if they had been.)

Although the original study showed our neighborhood had some of the most (and the richest) pedestrians in the city (second only to Union Square), anecdotally, merchants believe that a decrease in pedestrian traffic is having a negative impact on sales. There is more competition from the Internet as more people buy things online rather than shopping at a

brick-and-mortar stores. The Internet has generally hurt non-food retailers, although it has helped restaurants survive and even thrive via pick-up and delivery services. Merchants also say that street people and the homeless presence are a deterrent to potential shoppers. Many tourists comment that they had no idea there was so much homelessness in San Francisco. All these problems affect large chain stores as well as small merchants; for example, the CVS at Market Street and Noe Street closed in March after being open less than three years, because it was an underperforming store.

Finally, the tight restrictions on formula retail were mentioned as a deterrent (even for non-formula, small retailers) – because there is some fear that the neighborhood will be hostile (even if this is not the case). Brokers indicated that for larger spaces (3000 square feet and above) – current market conditions make entry for non-formula retailers extremely difficult, which is why DTNA has always advocated breaking up spaces into small-

er square footages. Secondly, some smaller retailers technically qualify as ‘formula’ even though they are San Francisco-based and have around a dozen, not thousands, of locations.

In any event, retaining the unique character of the neighborhood and businesses that will make the area a destina-

tion for both San Francisco residents and tourists is important to the success of the commercial districts. Most businesses surveyed indicated that the Castro brand, and identity, is still very strong: the challenge is to maximize our cachet locally, nationally, and internationally, and make it easier for small businesses to enter the neighborhood.

# Historic San Francisco



Duboce, northwest of Noe St, 1926



Market St near Mint Hill, 1901. Shows Market from Dolores looking east with St Ignatius and City Hall in background.

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## Castro Farmer's Market

As you may have already noticed, the Castro Farmers' Market on Noe Street is back in full swing. Every Wednesday evening, starting in March and going through November, from 4pm to 8pm, residents and guests of the neighborhood can peruse fresh produce, meat, eggs, pastas, and a variety of other locally made goods. Often times there is music to enjoy and dance to while shopping as well.

The market has been a great addition to the neighborhood as it has gotten people out into the streets and helps to foster a community feeling. Knowing that the produce and other goods that are sold are grown or made nearby also helps to further enhance that community feeling. For example,

the hardworking bees of City Bees produce their honey from nectar they gathered at gardens throughout the city.

If you have not already meandered through the market, come check it out. Join your friends and neighbors on Wednesday evenings. With summer fast approaching many great foods will be available soon. Blueberries! Peaches! Corn!

The market is managed and directed by the Pacific Coast Farmer's Market Association and information about the market as well as about the individual farmers and vendors is readily available on their website.

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday  
10:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Appointments recommended



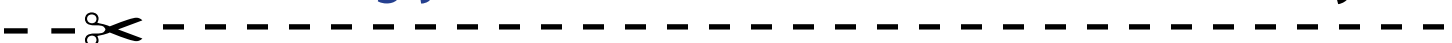
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- Show your pride in our Triangle
- Support historic preservation on your street
- Support our wonderful Duboce Park
- Encourage your neighbors to volunteer
- Supports the costs of your newsletter
- Maintain our neighborhood character and quality of life

**Join online using your credit/debit card! Visit**  
**[www.dtna.org/join.html](http://www.dtna.org/join.html) and become a member today.**



☒ **Yes! I want to join DTNA.**

☐ I want to get involved/volunteer, too!

**Please contact me. I'm interested in:**

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