



Affordable Housing Crisis Sparks Discussion Along Divisadero

by JJ STRAHLE

Plans for 650 Divisadero expanded significantly after Divisadero was rezoned. RENDERING: Webco Group LLC

With new developments planned for the Divisadero Corridor, affordable housing has become a hot topic around the neighborhood.

As reported previously, the North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association board has signed on to a policy statement to request that all new development in the neighborhood designate at least 20 percent of on-site units as below market rate (BMR) and make them available to low- and moderate-income qualifiers. In addition, a new group, known as Affordable Divis, has goals that include an even higher percentage of BMR units—33 percent at the minimum, 50 percent preferred—before endorsing a project. Even the city's Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission are working out ways to create additional BMR units or give higher priority to local residents for those units.

With so many proposals in the mix, it can be hard to keep them all straight. What follows is a rundown of some of the action taking place.

Board of Supervisors President (and District 5 Supervisor) London Breed has taken up a number of measures to increase density and the number of affordable units for new construction. This includes the designation of the Divisadero Corridor as a neighborhood commercial transit district (NCT), which provides for greater density of housing by increasing the total number of units permissible per surface area. It also requires that a percentage of the units contain multiple bedrooms. The NCT designation resulted

(continued on page 3)

FROM THE BOARD

Did you recognize us? As you may have noticed, the North Panhandle News is now the NOPNA News. The redesigned newsletter is part of an effort to create a more modern, streamlined publication for all of our readers, without compromising the stories and character that bind our community.

The redesign is the result of a lot of hard work from our volunteer newsletter team, graphic designer Lisa Eastlack, managing editor Libby Estell, and Mimi Sparrow. On behalf of the NOPNA board, I would like to express my gratitude for their creativity and commitment.

We're kicking off this year with a brand-new look, but in another way 2016 will be a year of looking back. That's because this year marks the 25th anniversary of our North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association, founded in 1991. Stay tuned for some special coverage of this major milestone.

With 25 years of community advocacy behind it, NOPNA is resolved to keep moving forward. Our goals are to help build a safe and diverse neighborhood, to encourage traffic safety, and to continue to host fun events for the community. We are also helping create dialogue between city officials and the community to address concerns about how to create a more balanced, affordable approach to housing. Check the newsletter, Facebook, or nopna.org for updates and information on how you can get involved.

As always, if you are interested in volunteering, please email board@nopna.org. Be sure to check the website for upcoming events.

I wish everyone a healthy and prosperous New Year!



Charles DuPigny is vice president of the NOPNA board.

NOPNANews

The NOPNA News is published by the North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association for the residents, businesses, and friends of our neighborhood, which is bounded by Masonic Avenue and Turk, Divisadero and Fell Streets.

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NOPNA's mission: The purpose of this association shall be to establish neighborhood unity, maintain multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity, foster a sense of neighborhood pride, promote a safe and clean community, and improve the quality of life for all residents of the neighborhood.

Contact NOPNA by email:
board@nopna.org
www.nopna.org

Get The News?—Pay Your Dues! Your NOPNA membership gives us a stronger voice at City Hall and supports our efforts to create a clean, safe, and friendly neighborhood.

Please join us! You can sign up online at nopna.org.

For more information, call 415-267-6113.

Calendar of Events

NOPNA General Meeting

Thursday, March 17
7:00 p.m. Informal get-together
7:30 p.m. Meeting
Oasis Cafe
901 Divisadero@McAllister

Divisadero Farmers Market

Sundays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Grove@Divisadero

SFPD Park Station Community Meeting

Tuesday, March 8, 6 p.m.
Park Station, 1899 Waller St.

SFPD Northern Station Community Meeting

Thursday, March 10, 6 p.m.
Northern Station, 1125 Fillmore St.

Panhandle Park Community Work Day

Saturday, February 13, 9–11 a.m.
Saturday, Jan. 9, 9–11 a.m.
Meet near the playground

Harding Theater Proposal Clears Hurdle

The Harding Theater is another step closer to renewal. On November 19, the San Francisco Planning Commission unanimously approved the theater owner's request for a conditional use authorization and multiple variances.

The conditional use permit allows the repurposing of the former Vaudeville theater from its last use as a church to its new life as Emporium, a bar and game arcade with other entertainment, movie and retail uses. Emporium's owners, brothers Danny and Doug Marks, presented their design and operation plans to the commission, much as they did at the Sept. 17 North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association General Meeting. At the urging of neighbors who attended the meeting, the Chicago-based owners added daytime operating hours to the plan to open the venue to the under-21 crowd.

Designs for Emporium are focused on preservation and restoration. "All significant character-defining spaces and details will remain," architect Mark Topetcher told Hoodline in November.

Proposed changes include upgrading the restrooms and rebuilding the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. The damaged plasterwork inside will be restored, and the marquee canopy at the front of the building will be rebuilt. The two retail spaces on either side of the theater's Divisadero Street entrance will be renovated and made available for rent by two additional businesses.

The variances permit a reduction in the required rear yard to accommodate two off-street parking spaces within 25 feet of the front wall of the proposed five-story, seven-unit condominium building at 1282 Hayes St. Another exempts the proposed Emporium from the requirement for an off-street freight-loading area.

The commission was convinced that the atypical size of the Hayes Street lot justified the hardship of applying typical zoning codes for rear yard and parking. They were also convinced that the theater's existing lack of

off-street loading doesn't need to be changed for the new tenant. Emporium plans to use existing on-street loading zones on Divisadero Street.

Harding Theater owner Michael Klestoff and the Marks brothers will continue with approvals for the site and building permits. Watch for future updates on their progress.

Dera-Jill Pozner is a member of the NOPNA board and an architect with a practice in NoPa.

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RENDERING: TOPetcher Architecture



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NOPNA Celebrates the Season



Top: Guests gathered for a group shot with Supervisor London Breed. Right: Colton Shrier sang and played guitar. PHOTOS: Libby Estell



NoPa friends and neighbors gathered at Cyprian's Center in December to enjoy good cheer and celebrate the holiday season. San Francisco Supervisors London Breed and Scott Weiner and Breed's legislative aide Vallie Brown stopped by. Live music was provided by Colton Shrier and Fr. Mike Reddig. Thanks to Fr. Thomas Jackson, executive director of the center for generously sharing the event space. Cyprian's Center is a community-based and volunteer-driven venue within St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church at Lyon and Turk Streets.

Mimi Sparrow is a member of the NOPNA board.



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Helping the Homeless: Dani Robillard

“Doer of Things.” That’s how Dani Robillard describes herself on her calling card. Among the things she’s done recently, one stands out. In December, Robillard raised \$900 from friends on Facebook, solicited donations from local businesses, and used the proceeds to distribute care packages to 90 homeless people.

Robillard calls the effort Operation Give a Damn, now in its second year. “It was surprising to see how many people wanted to contribute,” she says. “Knowing I was able to give 90 people warmth and fill their bellies? I’m stoked. That’s success.”

In addition to friends who gave money, goods and time, the managers at Lucky and Faletti markets donated bottled water and fresh fruit. “They have yes in their hearts,” Robillard says. “I love them so much.” What she couldn’t get donated, she bought.

Each beneficiary received two sets of socks and underwear, two PB&J sandwiches, two pieces of fruit, a bottle of water, a vitamin C packet, two chocolate candies and a handwritten “love note” from Robillard. Some also received hygiene items and hats and gloves. Five lucky recipients got a new backpack donated by some of Robillard’s friends.

How does Robillard, who waitresses at Bar Crudo and serves as a volunteer firefighter, know what the home-



less population needs most? She asked. “I learned last year that the one thing homeless people really need is socks and underwear. It’s a big, big deal. So is water.”

After stuffing the bags at her Lyon Street apartment, Robillard and friends made two trips to hand-deliver the care packages to people near Civic Center, around Sixth and Mission, and in the Tenderloin. “It’s brutal in the TL,” she says. “Word got out and we got swamped.” When she ran out of complete packages, she passed out lunch bags with extra sandwiches, water and notes.

A NoPa resident for more than 20 years, Robillard believes in acting locally. “I think it’s really important to get to know the people in your neighborhood and help them out,” she says. “Start small. Make five lunches. It’s never hard to find underprivileged people.”



Libby Estell is the managing editor of the NOPNA News.

Top: Dani Robillard has lived in NoPa for more than 20 years. **Middle:** Robillard distributed the bags to homeless people in the Tenderloin, SoMa and near Civic Center. **Bottom:** Friends helped Robillard assemble the bags at her Lyon Street home.

PHOTOS: Dani Robillard

OUT AND ABOUT

What's New in the Neighborhood?

Divisadero continues to attract new businesses, almost faster than we can report on them. The southern blocks, where NoPa becomes the Lower Haight, have been particularly active. Here's a roundup of the latest changes in and around the neighborhood.

With all the new businesses springing up, we're glad to hear the **Divisadero Merchants Association** is trying to regroup. A number of merchants gathered at **Madrone Art Bar** on Dec. 8 for a kickoff meeting. The organization fizzled last year after the closure of **Big Umbrella Studios**,

whose communications director served as president.

1. Lava Mae, the mobile shower service for the homeless, now parks its converted city bus outside the **DMV** at 1377 Fell St. on Saturdays from 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

2. Nigiri-only sushi restaurant Ijji opened in late January in the old **KK Cafe** space at 252 Divisadero St. The tiny 18-seat spot is open only for dinner, Tuesday to Sunday.

3. Indian Paradox is preparing to replace the former **King Foot Subs** at 258 Divisadero St. Owner Kavitha

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Raghavan plans to pair south Indian cuisine with wine, a concept she's been testing with pop-ups around the Bay Area.

4. Powder, a frozen dessert (think shaved ice) parlor, is taking over the old **Viper Vapor** shop at 260 Divisadero St. Founder Mimi Hanley and her business partner both live in the area and plan to open this summer.

5. Tsk/Tsk, which opened in the former Ziryab space last summer, closed its doors on Jan. 1. The closure makes way for the planned spring opening of **Horsefeather**, which the owners intend to be permanent.

6. Hayes Valley favorite **Souvla** has signed the lease on the former **Herbivore** space at 531 Divisadero St. The Greek menu will feature the same spit-roasted pork, lamb and chicken wraps and salads as the other location, as well as its frozen yogurt. Look for it to open later this year.

7. The owners of **Health Haven** and **Pet Haven** have announced they're closing in mid-February. They hoped to have a new tenant lined up before vacating but, at press time, no lease had been signed for the space at 621 Divisadero.

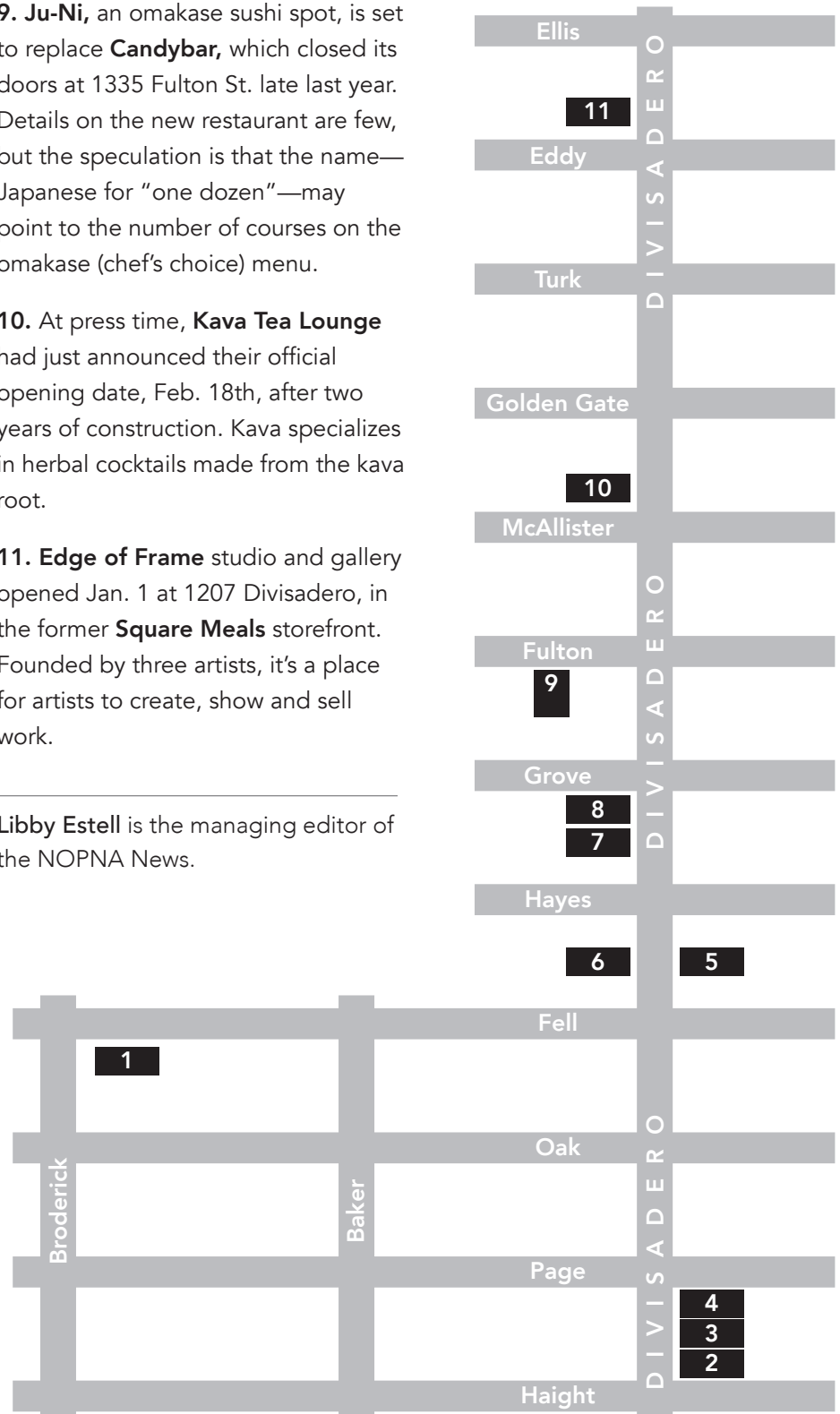
8. Colorado-based outdoor bag supplier **Topo Designs** opened in the former **Your Scents** shop at 645 Divisadero in mid-December.

9. Ju-Ni, an omakase sushi spot, is set to replace **Candybar**, which closed its doors at 1335 Fulton St. late last year. Details on the new restaurant are few, but the speculation is that the name—Japanese for “one dozen”—may point to the number of courses on the omakase (chef's choice) menu.

10. At press time, **Kava Tea Lounge** had just announced their official opening date, Feb. 18th, after two years of construction. Kava specializes in herbal cocktails made from the kava root.

11. Edge of Frame studio and gallery opened Jan. 1 at 1207 Divisadero, in the former **Square Meals** storefront. Founded by three artists, it's a place for artists to create, show and sell work.

Libby Estell is the managing editor of the NOPNA News.



Holiday Tree Invites Peaceful Reflection

Kelly Doran was having a hard time getting in the holiday spirit. It was her first Christmas in 17 years without her beloved dogs, Powder and Daffy, who she'd had to put to rest earlier in the year. She couldn't bring herself to decorate. "I was going to skip the holidays."

But then came the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino. Doran decided to share the holidays rather than skip them. She put up her tree in the archway entrance to her garage near the intersection of Central and Hayes for neighbors to enjoy. "Many ISIS attacks had already happened, so I got the idea to invite people to write their thoughts on colored index cards and hang them on the tree."

She posed a sign that read, "Our world is hurting, feel free to write a message on a card...joy, hope, anger, courage, despair... and hang your thoughts on our Peace Tree." She placed a crate filled with index cards, colored markers and paper clips on the ground beside the tree.

"It was instant and powerful. People started writing messages."

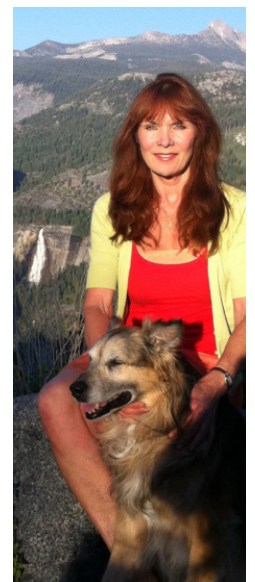
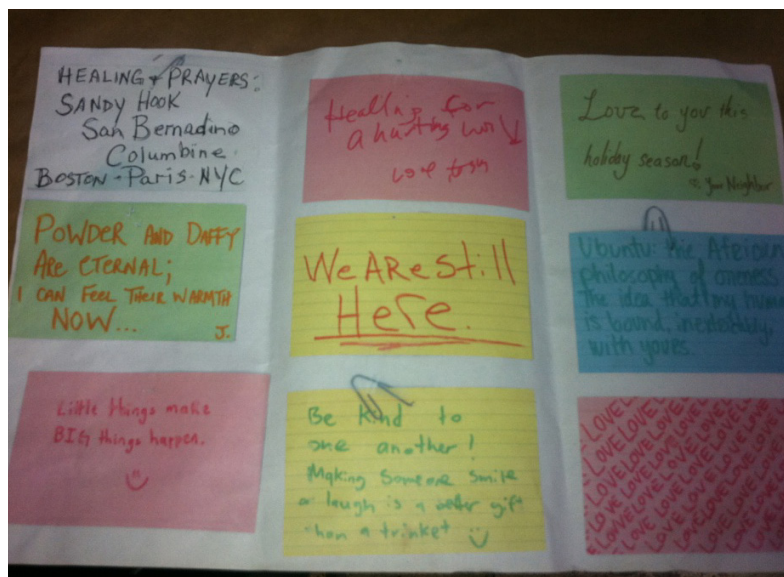
Doran went daily to read the new messages of hope. "Yes, there was some vandalism and some nasty messages," Doran admits, but she "would just clean things up and restock."

She left the ugly messages so as not to sanitize human nature. "But after a week, someone took the unpleasant cards down. Pretty considerate, huh?"

In all, Doran's Peace Tree attracted more than 80 messages. Most were "happy, positive, poignant and unsigned." More than a third were written by children. "Some messages were prayers to deceased loved ones, some were prayers for the Middle East, USA, schools and students that were attacked by domestic terrorism. Some were kids just wishing merry Christmas. And many were thanks for the Peace Tree and lights."

Sadly, not all of the responses were positive. One of Doran's neighbors insisted it come down. At 11 a.m. on Christmas Eve, Doran's landlord and a fire inspector cut the secured ropes and pulled the Peace Tree to the sidewalk, destroying many of the messages in the process.

Libby Estell is the managing editor of The NOPNA News.



Left: Doran erected the Peace Tree outside her garage. **Middle:** Doran preserved the notes people posted on the tree after it came down. **Right:** Kelly Doran. **PHOTOS:** Kelly Doran

Protected Bike Lanes Along the Panhandle: What Do You Think?

As a parent, spouse, safety advocate and environmentalist, I see cycling as a viable means of traversing the city for many people. I find that taking my son to school, shopping, and play are a more interactive experience with him on a bike, and we have a chance to interact with others more easily as well. I am experienced and comfortable riding in traffic, but approximately 60 percent of the population are known to be “interested but concerned,” would-be riders who are reluctant to ride in traffic.

The Panhandle is a wonderful and well-used park, with a capacity problem on the northern path. Plans to improve the southern path are in the works, but San Francisco’s growing number of bicyclists will result in greater challenges. A relatively easy solution is to expand the protected cycle path from Baker Street to Shrader Street with parked cars and a passenger buffer similar to John F. Kennedy Drive in Golden Gate Park. The result would be three continuous vehicle lanes instead of contraction and expansion at varying intervals with no loss of parking.

The North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association board would like your opinion about the proposal to install a dedicated bike lane along the north and south sides of the Panhandle, protected by parked cars and a painted buffer with pedestrian islands, from Baker Street to Shrader Street.

Your input will be valuable in determining our priority in requesting attention for improved infrastructure in our community and helpful in showing support for the plan. Please visit nopna.org to get more information, take a look at possible design elements and complete the survey.



The Panhandle is one of the city’s most heavily used bike routes.
PHOTO: SF.Streetsblog.org

The North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association board would like your opinion about the proposal to install a dedicated bike lane along the north and south sides of the Panhandle, protected by parked cars and a painted buffer with pedestrian islands, from Baker Street to Shrader Street.

Tim Hickey is president of the NOPNA board.

MOLLIE POE

Top Producer & NOPA Specialist



As a long-term resident of North Panhandle, a Mom with kids in local schools, and a strong supporter and advocate of everything NOPA (including the neighborhood association as a business member and avid sponsor), I regularly represent Buyers and Sellers within our wonderful neighborhood.

Please visit my website for further information on past sales and property presentations, or call me directly with any Real Estate inquiries.

If you are thinking of selling, I'd love to help with a market analysis of your property. Low inventory continues to drive our market and you maybe very surprised to find the 'hidden equity' in your home, given these market conditions. I have good insight into NOPA's Buyer pool, and I frequently have access to pocket listings and a proven strategy to get you the best results within NOPA's borders or other neighborhoods in our 7x7.

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