

# North Panhandle



North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association

March/April 2005

## Harding Theater's Fate to be Revisited by Supervisors

by Todd Sayre and Andrew de Vries

On March 15, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors will vote on an issue that may change the character of the North Panhandle neighborhood. The vote will determine whether the Harding Theater should be demolished and replaced with condominiums and commercial space, or be considered for preservation.

Located on Divisadero between Hayes and Grove, the Harding Theater was built in 1926 and designed by the Reid Brothers, prominent San Francisco architects who also designed the Fairmont Hotel, the 1909 Cliff House, the Grand Lake Theater in Oakland, and other notable California landmarks. The Harding served as a neighborhood movie theater for many years and in the early 1970s hosted live theater and music. The Grateful Dead played there, and Jerry

Garcia performed "Hideaway" for the first time on its stage.

For the past 30 years, the theater has been occupied by a succession of churches. With few neighborhood residents in the congregations and a deteriorating exterior, the Harding slipped into relative anonymity, leading many to assume that it was simply a vacant old building.

Local developers Michael Klestoff and Patrick Stack recently purchased the Harding with plans to tear it down and replace it with 18 condos, 18 parking

*Continued on page 3*

**NOPNA General Meeting:  
THURSDAY, MARCH 17**

**CAFE NEON**

**801 McAllister (at Baker)**

**7 PM: Meet your neighbors  
7:30-9 PM: General meeting**

Special Guests:  
District 5 Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi  
Representative from Park Police  
Headquarters

Current issues to be discussed:  
Lyon Street homicide • Harding  
Theater restoration or removal  
• Washington Mutual Bank at  
Albertson's • Proposed SF  
Day School Science Center

## Homicide in North Panhandle

*The following account was circulated via email late in February, and signed by the members of the NOPNA Board.*

Around midnight on Wednesday, February 23, a young man, Gaylon Smith, was shot at the corner of Lyon and McAllister. According to several eyewitnesses, he was shot by a man on foot who was seen associating with several other individuals in a black car. The victim ran up Lyon, where he collapsed and died.

Several neighbors gave their accounts to the police. Some residents were not comfortable acting as witnesses, but after being persuaded by others, they stepped forward to offer descriptions of the occurrence.

The police and neighbors believe the incident to be gang related. While the police state that the victim was not a NOPNA area resident, nothing is known at this time about the perpetrators. At the time of this writing, the police have not identified any suspects, and no one has been taken into custody.

The police maintain that this incident does not appear to be related to a shooting that took place later that night at Eddy and Scott. Inspectors Maureen

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## President's Corner

# GO for the GOAL

By Tys Sniffen

As an efficiency consultant in my “day job,” I work with small businesses and individuals to help streamline their processes and organize their work to keep them focused on what’s important. A lot of that work involves organizing computer and paper files, as well as establishing good communication policies. But it also entails getting my clients to express the “why” of the projects. Once we ask them the reason they consider it important to reorganize their files, the way to carry out that work often becomes clearer. On the other hand, sometimes it reveals that the job is not worth doing.

Outlining a successful strategy often depends upon setting clear, achievable goals.

This approach is useful in many situations—including the everyday experience of living in San Francisco. The following are some personal answers to the question, “What is my specific goal as a San Franciscan and a neighborhood resident?”

1. To participate in metropolitan living, with all the artistic, social, and economic benefits that it brings.
2. To take advantage of the park, the public transit system, and the authentic culture of the North Panhandle area and contiguous communities.
3. To make a positive difference in my community, get to know my neighbors, and improve a small section of my world.

In the same spirit, I offer a few responses to the question, “What is NOPNA’s goal?”

1. To build a stronger sense of community—in other words, to encourage those who live within our “borders” to recognize that they have a stake in the future of the community; and that they are welcome and belong.
2. To focus people’s energies on community improvement and organize them to implement it, from tree planting to street cleaning to communicating our concerns to the police.
3. To help build a more cohesive, vibrant community that continues to be as livable, or even more livable, than it is now.

Challenging questions arise from each of these stated goals, but particularly from the third one. There are many different opinions about what makes our community livable. Some would argue in favor of more parking, more bikes, less business, fewer bars, smaller houses, or more apartments—all debatable points, which would find contrasting opinions on each side.

NOPNA’s leaders must figure out how to navigate toward this elusive goal. To do so, they need to gather opinions, conduct research, call on past experience...and, when possible, take votes to determine the majority view on a particular issue.

Not an easy task—but I’ve seen great passion, hard work, and excellent ideas summoned to solve problems and make improvements, for the simple reason that people care about their community.

So, what are your goals for the neighborhood? What do you think NOPNA’s should be? Let me know!

See you on the streets,

—Tys

North Panhandle NEWS is published for the community, businesses, and friends of our neighborhood, bounded by Turk Street, Divisadero Street, Fell Street, and Masonic Avenue.

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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:** PO Box 591504  
San Francisco, CA 94159-1504

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### GET the NEWS?—PAY your DUES!

The NOPNA newsletter depends on contributions from YOU—association members and community residents—to keep you informed about events, activities, and initiatives going on in our great neighborhood. Please DUE your share! Sign up at our next meeting, or fill out the membership form on page 8.

### Homicide in North Panhandle

*(Continued from page 1)*

D’Amico and Mike Johnson are handling the case.

Anyone with any knowledge of this event should contact the San Francisco Police Department anonymous tip line at 575-4444.

The NOPNA Board considers it extremely important to keep neighbors informed about this event and subsequent developments. We are following the case closely, and will be working with both neighbors and the police to keep this kind of violence out of our neighborhood. We will also explore various outreach opportunities on safety, community building, and youth outreach. Most important, our hearts go out to the victim and his family.

At times like these, it is essential for the community to stay involved. To find out what NOPNA is planning, and what you can do, see page 8.

## Harding Theater (Continued from page 1)

spaces, and 5,000 square feet of retail space. Mark Topetcher, the project's architect and former president of the Alamo Square Neighborhood Association, commented in a January 14, 2005 *San Francisco Chronicle* article that the Harding's interior had been "mostly stripped," a point that some in the neighborhood now debate.

With little public support for the theater, the city Planning Department approved its demolition last December. A recent article in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (February 2-8, 2005) accused the Planning Department of making this decision without visiting the theater or considering its historic or architectural significance, a view shared by many local residents.



Some also contend that the Planning Department circumvented the environmental review process required under the California Environmental Quality Act.

The Planning Department's ruling was appealed with signatures from Supervisors Tom Ammiano, Michela Alioto-Pier, Chris Daly, Ross Mirkarimi, and Aaron Peskin.



*Views of historic interior (above) and exterior (below left) of Harding Theater in 1942*

Since mid-January, more than 2,000 residents and 50 local merchants have signed a petition against the demolition of the Harding Theater. With growing support for preserving the building, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors is now prepared to consider the issue.

If the Planning Department determines that the Harding Theater merits historic status, the demolition may be halted, providing time to examine various preservationist plans with the new owners.

NOPNA encourages local residents to attend the March 15 Board of Supervisors meeting, listen to both sides of the issue, and make their opinion heard.

*Todd Sayre and Andrew de Vries are NOPNA Board members.*

## San Francisco Day School Science Center Planned

By Leela Gill

San Francisco Day School (<http://www.sfds.net>), located at 350 Masonic Avenue, is planning to expand in 2006 to include a new science center. The expansion plans, which have yet to be approved by the city, include replacing the building located at 2130 Golden Gate with a three-floor building with an enhanced playground in the rear. The new structure will also have an expanded basement garage with 20 off-street parking spaces.

The school administration has started the process of obtaining permits and completing environmental studies. They hope to gain city approval for the project early in 2006. The administrators have sent letters to their immediate neighbors telling them about the plans. Additionally, they hosted a neighborhood

*Continued on page 6*

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# Your Local Kickball Team

By Michael Cianfrani

In case you hadn't noticed, we want to call to your attention that our North of Panhandle area now boasts a competitive kickball team. Yes, you got that right—kickball! Remember the baseball-like game you used play in grade school with a big red bouncy ball and your feet? Well, that's the one we're using to make the North Panhandle proud.

Captain Sarah, of Central Coffee Tea & Spice (Hayes/Central), began spreading the word to recruit a kickball team last year after hearing about the World Adult Kickball Association (WAKA) Yerba Buena Division. Having fielded a full roster and appeared in two semi-finals in as many seasons, the team—named the Big



Daddys—are poised to make a run for the championship this spring season. We are a proud neighborhood team, and look forward to an even more successful fall 2005 season, which starts shortly.

WAKA is a worldwide nonprofit organization that fosters social, friendly competition and community service, all

centered around the great sport of kickball. Each week, local businesses (Parkside Market and Nimer's) provide refreshing "hops-based power drinks" for the fearless Big Daddys. For this we are most appreciative. In addition, the 1751 Social Club (Fulton/Masonic) agreed last season to become a league sponsor, so food and drink are as plentiful as the good times when we play on Wednesday evenings.

As we pull the cleats from the back of the closet and pump up the big red bouncy balls in anticipation of another great year, we want the neighborhood to know that we aim to bring the trophy home to the Panhandle this season.



Creelman :) Farmer

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## Crime Watch

Ordinary crime in our neighborhood has been overshadowed by the February 23–24 fatal shootings at Lyon and McAllister (see front page) and at Scott and Eddy. Burglaries were the most common crimes (13), including a foiled attempt in the Petrini Place parking garage at 2:24 AM on January 31. Three vehicles were stolen and seven cars were burglarized.

The police recovered two stolen vehicles and at 3:28 AM on January 27 arrested a fugitive wanted for murder at Divisadero and McAllister.



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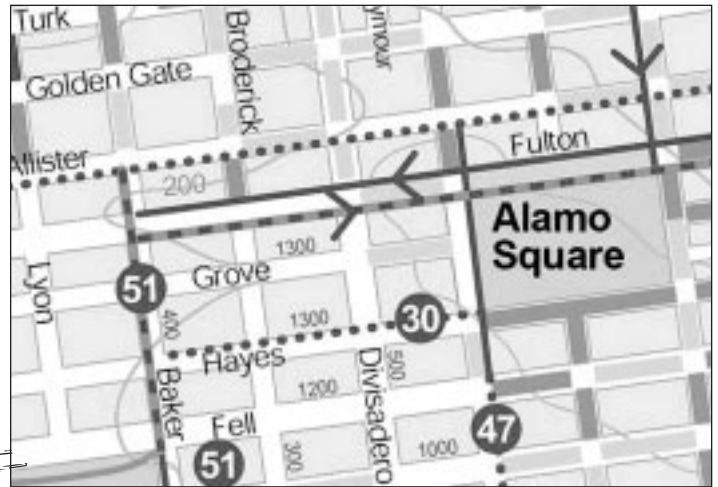
# New Bike Lane to Serve North Panhandle

By Dale Danley

The Mass Transit Authority Commission is considering a proposal to add a westbound bike lane on Fulton Street from Webster to Baker. The idea is to create a safer, more comfortable option for bike travel to Alamo Square, past Cafe Abir and into the heart of the North of Panhandle. If the MTA approves of the lane, the proposal then goes to the Board of Supervisors for a final vote.

Hill-averse bikers know that the Alamo Square Hill crests on Fulton at Scott Street. McAllister, which is slightly lower, might seem like a better place for a bike lane; however, McAllister has a Muni line and no room for a bike lane.

The proposed five-foot wide bike lane can be installed and striped without removing a traffic lane. The new bike lane would end at Baker, where Fulton picks up a westbound traffic lane. At that point, bicyclists can get to other routes by the north-south bike lanes on Baker. From Baker, options for continuing west include the Golden



The North Panhandle is criss-crossed by bike routes. Darkly shaded streets indicate steep hills.

Gate Avenue bike lanes and the Panhandle Multi-use Path. Go to [www.sfbike.org/maps](http://www.sfbike.org/maps) for more route info.

## Q1 2005 North Panhandle Real Estate Update

Presented by Andrew de Vries, MBA (University of San Francisco Alumnus)

Your Neighbor & "North Panhandle Real Estate Specialist"



Dear Neighbors and Friends:

Following is a Q1 2005 market update for the North Panhandle with regard to condominiums, single family homes and 2-4 unit buildings according to the *San Francisco Multiple Listing Service*:

Condos	Sales	Avg. Price	Low	High	Avg. Price Chg.
Q1 2005	11	\$667,500	\$495,200	\$825,000	+9.7%
Q1 2004	15	\$608,000	\$450,000	\$851,000	
2-4 Units	Sales	Avg. Price	Low	High	Avg. Price Chg.
Q4 2005	2	\$1,296,000	\$1,025,000	\$1,886,000	+13.5%
Q4 2004	3	\$1,142,000	\$901,000	\$1,600,000	
SFHs	Sales	Avg. Price			
Q4 2005	1	\$940,000			
Q4 2004	0				



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Low property inventory levels slowed local sales volume for the first quarter, while continued buyer demand pushed prices up a respectable 11% avg. over the same quarter last year. For more information on these sales or if you are thinking of selling or purchasing a home, please call me at 415-664-9400 x.277. for a free no-obligation consultation.

# Why a Graffiti Ordinance is so important

Gideon Kramer

The Graffiti Abatement and Removal Ordinance passed late in 2004 by the Board of Supervisors is the City's first attempt to make the person on whose property the graffiti is located legally responsible for removing it. The law states that upon notification by the Department of Public Works (DPW), the property owner has 30 days to remove the graffiti from his/her property.

If, after that period of time, the owner has failed to do so, or failed to contact the Director of DPW to contest the alleged violation, the DPW may obtain a court order authorizing it to enter the property, remove the blight, and charge the property owner a minimum of \$500 to get the job done.

Prior to its passage, there was no specific law that could be cited to compel the property owner to remove what is plainly and legally speaking a public nuisance. This law is designed to correct that deficit.

The rationale for the new law is based on the "broken window" syndrome: Let graffiti persist, and it attracts

much more; get rid of it right away and it tends to diminish. Since the city is no longer able to bear the cost of removing graffiti from private property, it is necessary to invoke the civic and legal responsibility of property owners to do their part to solve the problem.

The new ordinance is sensitive to property owners who are unduly burdened by graffiti vandalism, and those who, because of age or disability, are unable to remove the graffiti in a timely manner. It also specifically exempts acid and scratch etching of glass, a particularly difficult, expensive, and growing form of graffiti vandalism.

In addition to crafting this ordinance, the Graffiti Vandalism Advisory Board has placed considerable emphasis on enforcement. As a result of its ongoing efforts, the District Attorney's Office has begun a thorough review of its position on graffiti prosecutions, looking at best practices of other cities throughout California and the US and studying ways to ensure that graffiti vandalism is dealt with as a serious crime. The City is mak-

ing a strong effort to spread the word that San Francisco will no longer permit graffiti vandals operate with impunity.

*North Panhandle resident Gideon Kramer is a member of the Graffiti Advisory Board, which worked to craft the ordinance.*

## SF Day School Science Center

*(Continued from page 3)*

informational meeting on January 19. Unfortunately, only a handful of people attended, so all those interested in learning more about the project are encouraged to contact Carolyn Sasser, San Francisco Day School Community Representative and Business Manager, at 931-2422 X 111 or [csasser@sdfs.net](mailto:csasser@sdfs.net).

The school will be hosting additional meetings about the project, where community members can view the architectural drawings. Day School representatives will also attend NOPNA's May 19 neighborhood meeting.



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# FOOD in the 'HOOD

## Little Star Pizza

By Alisa Rafter



Little Star Pizza, located on Divisadero between Fulton and McAllister, has become one of our favorite places in the neighborhood to get a casual dinner. The restaurant specializes in deep-dish (think Zachary's) and thin-crust pies, and they do a fantastic job with both.

My husband's favorite is a deep-dish pizza with tasty sausage and kalamata olives. The tomatoes that make up the sauce are fresh tasting and well seasoned, and the sausage and olives are spicy-sweet. Personally, I'm partial to Little Star's thin-crust pizza. The crust is crisp and buttery, and the judicious use of sauce and cheese makes it easy to appreciate the quality ingredients.

There are several house-recommended specialties on the menu, including the

deep-dish pizza topped with spinach blended with ricotta and feta, mushrooms, onions, and garlic; and the "White Pie" thin-crust pizza with garlic, olive oil, mozzarella, zucchini, tomatoes, and feta.

The topping list ranges from conventional items (olives, bell peppers, mushrooms, pepperoni) to more creative choices (gorgonzola and artichoke hearts). Last time we were there, however, the specialty of the day—a thin-crust pizza with yellow squash, gorgonzola, and red onions—didn't impress us much: the flavors were a bit too subtle. I would like to see fresh basil added to the list of a topping choices, and an even lighter layer of fresh mozzarella.

The rest of the menu is carefully crafted to offer a choice of food and bev-

erages that elevate the dining experience a step above that of the usual pizza joint. Appetizers include fresh salads, sour-dough garlic bread, and spicy chicken wings. Homemade cheesecake and gelato are offered for dessert. There is a nice wine list to choose from, as well as a series of champagne cocktails (the "Movie Star" looks exciting: champagne infused with ginger candy, ginger beer, and ginger extract), and a good selection of beers, specialty sodas, and sparkling water. Drinks are \$1 off during Little Star's happy hours, from 4:30 to 6:30 and 10 to 11:30 PM.

You can order your pizza to go (Little Star doesn't deliver), as we've

*Continued on page 8*

## Mollie Poe, Zephyr Top Producer.

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As a resident and a realtor in the neighborhood, I welcome any real estate questions you might have! Please contact me with any inquiries in regards to:

- Pricing and marketing strategies for sellers
- Understanding and qualifying for T.I.C's
- The condo conversion process
- Helping first time buyers get into the market

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**GET ACTIVE!** Your NOPNA membership gives us a stronger voice at City Hall and supports our efforts to create a clean, safe, and friendly neighborhood.

Membership is open to everyone residing or interested in the area located within our boundaries: Divisadero, Masonic, Fell, and Turk.

Please complete the following information:

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Visit our Web site: [www.nopna.org](http://www.nopna.org)

**FOOD in the HOOD: Little Star Pizzeria**

*(Continued from page 7)*

done many times. But then you would be missing out on the delightful dining space. The long, narrow room with a seated counter along one side, combined with the dimmed lights and flickering red candles that add colorful accents to a predominantly dark, minimalist interior, create the feel of an intimate neighborhood bar. There is a jukebox with a wide range of selections that should make even the choosiest music aficionados happy.

The décor and atmosphere make Little Star a sophisticated yet informal

San Francisco spot with creative flair. Our advice: Don't fail to stop in for pizza and drinks, play a few songs on the jukebox, and welcome this new eatery to the neighborhood. It will probably become one of your favorites!

*Little Star Pizza is located at 846 Divisadero. It's open from 5 to 10 PM Sunday through Thursday and 5 to 11 PM Friday and Saturday.*

*Phone: 415-441-1118*

*<http://www.littlestarpizza.com>*

**NOPNA Salutes its Dedicated Business Members**

The following local business owners are dedicated to making the North Panhandle a better place for all of us. We salute their efforts and encourage you to use their services and frequent their businesses:

**Alex Chuzhoy, Fidelity Capital Funding:**  
415.863.2200

**Andrew de Vries, Prudential Real Estate:**  
415-664-9400 x.277

**Arthur Tom:** 415-229-1279

**Becky & John Layton, Pacific Union Real Estate:** 415-885-5325

**Car-los Auto Service:** 1970 McAllister,  
415-567-8420

**David Habash, Parkside Market:**  
1600 Hayes, 415-885-3483

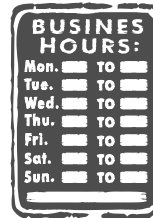
**Emanuel Church of God in Christ:** 1649 Hayes,  
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**Giday Beshue, Club Waziema:** 543 Divisadero,  
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**Mollie Poe, Zephyr Real Estate:**  
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**Pacific Primary School:** 1500 Grove,  
415-346-0906

**Frances and Lilly, Fairway Cleaners**  
(corner of Baker and McAllister)



**Working Together, We Can Keep Violence out of the Neighborhood**

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- **Call 553-0123** to report ANY suspicious activity. If you know anything about this case, call the anonymous tip line: 575-4444.
- **Get to know your neighbors.** Start on your block. Introduce yourself. Show your concern. Strength comes in numbers.
- **Get OUTSIDE!** Walk with your dogs, your children, your friends. When faced with a frightening crime, we tend to retreat into our homes. Spend more time on your stoop and on your streets.
- **Mind your street.** As trivial as it may sound, . Continue to pick up trash and call 28-CLEAN when you see illegal dumping of materials or graffiti. The message? You

care enough to keep the streets clean; you care enough to keep them safe.

- **Youth Outreach:** Do you know the kids hanging out on the streets by name? Do you stop and engage? One neighborhood resident has encouraged young people to improve their lives, stay in school, and get jobs. She even bought bus passes for a few of them so that they could get to work. Amazing what small gestures can do!

**WHAT NOPNA WILL BE DOING:**

- We will stay close to the case by working with Park Station. We will inform the neighborhood as we get more information.
- The Safety Committee and Block Captains will reconvene to discuss additional steps NOPNA needs to take.

- NOPNA launched a program several years ago called "RESPECT the NEIGHBORHOOD." We will redistribute signs for the community to hang in their windows or on their doors to send a clear message that violence will not be tolerated, and that we will do all that we can to build a strong, healthy neighborhood for all!
- Youth Outreach – We will be exploring forms of youth outreach at both the board and general meetings.

If you can support any of the above activities, or have ideas about other measures NOPNA can take, please contact Jennifer Johnson: ([jenniferj@nopna.org](mailto:jenniferj@nopna.org)).

See you on the Streets,  
—The NOPNA Board