

SAN FRANCISCO



Michael Gordon
City Hall Beat

Awddling mayor ostly

Mayor Gavin Newsom has yet to really put his thumbprint on three departments that history can help or hurt the Franciscans judge a condition of parks grounds, the cleanliness of streets and sidewalks and a development.

Newsom will solidify his mark as mayor when he decides to put in charge of the most important departments in city government: recreation and park, public planning.

When it comes to two of the most important positions, he hasn't managed to fill them.

For example, the anniversary of Elizabeth's departure as head of the city is a mark. She was replaced by Agunbiade, who hasn't managed to shake the word from the general manager's commission that the department inter-

candidates, and forwarded recommendations to Newsom, but he has yet to act.

Agunbiade, a city government official who worked on high-profile projects at the Department of Public Works, is still at Rec and Park, but he hasn't yet persuaded the city that he is the one for the job.

Newsom's in naming a new manager has hurt the city. Philanthropists, who used to help the cash-strapped system, don't like the change at the top, and Rec and Park workers don't know if they will be around tomorrow.

Agunbiade's to enact a much-needed change in the agency. It comes to the Planning Department, Newsom said when he was named for mayor that he would be planning director.

Newsom, who ushered in the development boom when he was mayor. The Commission wasn't as strong as the place Green, and it took until the fall to secure his position. There's been an acting director.

Newsom pulled in Dean Matney as the planning director in 1992, to captain the city until a permanent director could be found.

Newsom received high marks, but employee morale and some long-range planning has been offered to stay on the end of the year, and the politically hot climate of the city.

Newsom and the city may need that to persuade a qualified person to take the job.

Newsom's position at the Department of Public Works isn't as strong as yet. Newsom just named the director Ed Lee to be the city's chief ad-



Photos by LIZ HAFALIA / The Chronicle

Patricia Rose, a muralist, gives a tour of murals on Harrison at 24th Street. Precita Eyes has dubbed May Mural Awareness Month.

MISSION

Celebrating art that draws people together

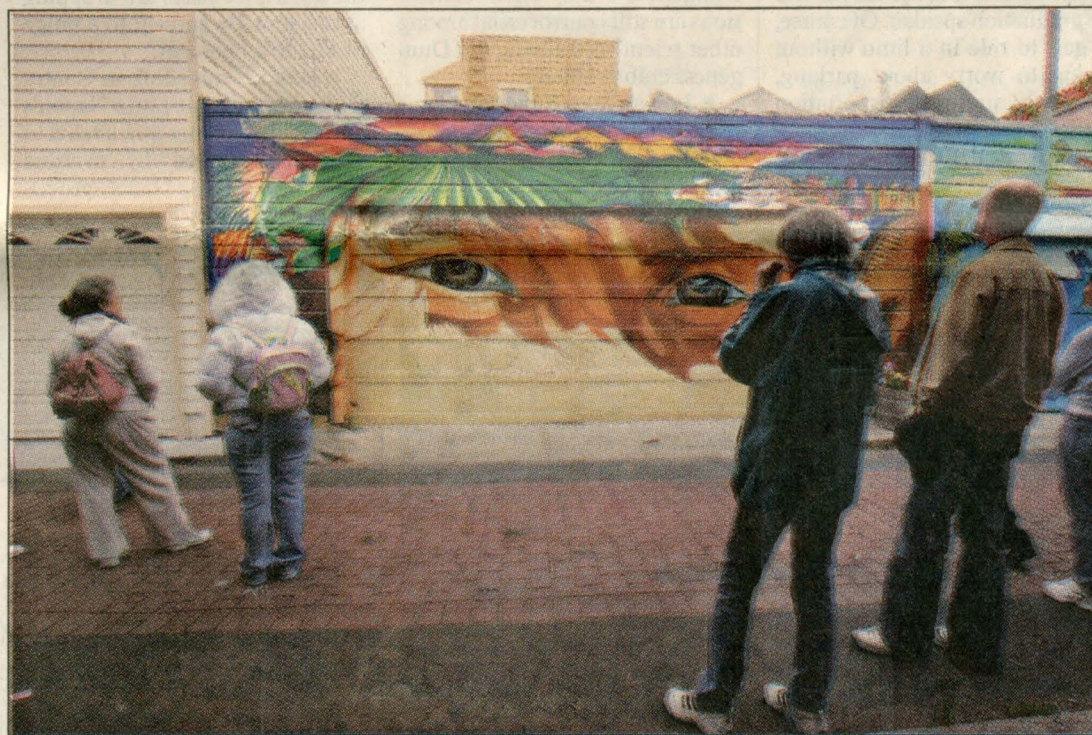
By Tyche Hendricks
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

For the past two months, Potrero Hill resident Aliseo Purpur-Pontoniore has spent his Saturday afternoons in an alley near Larkin Street in San Francisco's Tenderloin. With a dozen other teenagers, Aliseo, 16, has scrubbed down the dingy brick wall of a Laundromat, marked off a 15-foot-tall by 60-foot-long grid with charcoal, sketched out a collaborative drawing — the animals of the Chinese zodiac washing laundry in a river — and is now filling in the image with color.

Using the plastic lid of a 5-gallon paint bucket as an improvised palette, Aliseo mixed blue and turquoise until he had created a hue just right for the sky.

"This is a way of getting your art on the street," said Aliseo, who was drawn to graffiti before he discovered mural-making. "Lots of people stop and look at it. It's not like being famous, but it's a way of getting your art looked at. You have an audience."

Aliseo and the other members of his urban youth arts class — run by the Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center — expect to finish their mural this month, a time when it is likely to get extra attention. He and his classmates are volunteering their time for this project, and Precita Eyes helped the Laundromat provide the paint and materials.



The tour stops at a political mural in Balmy Alley by Nicole Emanuel. The garage door was painted by Susan Cervantes, and the recent renovation was by Susan's son Suaro Cervantes.

For 15 years, Precita Eyes has carved out May as mural awareness month, and this year they have booked a full schedule that includes mural workshops, mural tours, a competitive "paint-off," a daylong festival and an awards ceremony to honor the year's most vibrant work.

San Francisco's rich tradition of muralism dates back to the 1930s, when Mexican painter Diego Rivera completed monumental works at the Pacific Stock Exchange, the San Francisco Art Institute and the 1939 World's Fair, said muralist Juana Alicia Montoya, who teaches a course on Raza art history at San

Francisco State University. "In the 1960s and '70s, the Mission District became the cultural heart of the Chicano movement in California," said Montoya. "And the murals were an integral part of that movement, as was theater and poetry."

► MURALS: Page F6

EXCELSIOR

Library gets an upgrade

Branch on Mission is only the first of 19 to be modernized

By Kathleen Sullivan
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

It's noisy inside the Excelsior Branch Library these days.

One recent weekday morning, instead of the usual hush, the one-story building was filled with the sounds of construction — loud conversations conducted over the metallic whine of an electric saw slicing through panels of plywood.

The library also was filled with light, streaming in through new windows and from new cathedral-style light fixtures hanging from its 20-foot ceiling.

And it was filled with empty bookshelves — framed in beautifully grained maple — awaiting books.

The library, whose sliding glass doors open onto Mission Street, is the first to receive an extreme makeover under a \$106 million program that will modernize 19 libraries, approved by voters five years ago.

It will celebrate its grand reopening in early July.

All of the renovations are expected to be complete by the end of 2009.

Under the renovation program, the libraries will get new electrical systems that can handle more computers, including personal laptops brought in by patrons; wider aisles and bathrooms accessible to all visitors; and frames and foundations strengthened to better withstand earthquakes.

A crew from CDX Builders Inc., the San Francisco contractor overseeing the renovation, has installed new footings, grade beams and steel I-beams in the Excelsior library, which was built in 1967.

"We beefed it up quite a bit," said project manager Victor Chu, standing in the foyer of the library. "It's sturdy all around."

The library also will have a new community meeting room with a terrace for public use.

Across town, the West Portal Branch Library, next in line for renovation, has been shuttered since December.

The two-story building, with its white stucco walls and red tile roof, was built in 1939 with money from the Works Progress Administration, a federal program that created jobs for millions of people left impoverished by the Great Depression.

The library has been stripped of its books, shelves and furniture. The lead paint on its interior walls has been removed. So has its vinyl flooring, which contained asbestos. Its courtyard has been roped off with a makeshift fence of yellow caution tape.

► LIBRARY: Page F4

SCHOOLS

'Gypsy' school uprooted again

Creative Arts returning to former home in Western Addition



Cost hike affects library plans

► **LIBRARY**
From Page F1

low caution tape and construction barriers.

Signs all over the building — and a freestanding sign on the site — announce its impending transformation.

When it reopens in late 2006, the building, whose main entrance is on the second floor at the top of a wide red brick staircase, will have an elevator with an entrance on the sidewalk level of Ulloa Street.

Mindy Linetzky, bond program administrator for the San Francisco Public Library, said the city felt the first sting of the recent Bay Area spike in construction costs when bids came in 25 percent higher than expected for the West Portal project.

In response, the San Francisco Library Commission dipped into its reserves and approved an additional \$650,000 for the project, which is now valued at \$4.5 million.

Linetzky attributed the rise in construction costs to a variety of factors, including increased energy prices, unexpected jumps in the price of steel and cement, and competition for both basic materials and workers.

She said the hike in construction costs has affected some of the renovation projects currently under design.

"We're still doing all the priorities that we've already promised — seismic upgrades, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) code compliance and new technology," Linetzky said. "But we may cut back in some of the extra frills. We may have to cut back on the amount of additional square footage to the buildings."

She said the library may not be able to expand the Bernal Heights Branch Library, whose original design included a small addition on the Andover Street side of the building.

Linetzky said the library is expected to recommend that the commission boost the budget for the Noe Valley Branch Library by \$500,000 to \$670,000 to cope with



LIZ HAFALIA / The Chronicle

Excelsior Branch workers place the first set of books on the shelves of the newly renovated library.

The city felt the first sting of the recent Bay Area spike in construction costs when bids came in 25 percent higher than expected for the West Portal project.

the increase in construction costs.

The original design, which was approved by the commission last May, was valued at \$4.2 million.

The library has already altered the plans for the Noe Valley library

to save costs, by reducing the amount of excavation and rearranging the bathrooms. After the design changes, the size of the program area increased slightly.

"Anybody walking into the library wouldn't know the difference," Linetzky said.

Luis Herrera, who was appointed the City Librarian in February, said the library will monitor the situation closely as the renovation program proceeds.

"We don't want to shortchange any community whose branch we were planning to renovate," said Herrera, who oversaw the public library system in Pasadena before accepting the top post in San Francisco.

"Obviously, we have to be looking at the plans very carefully for each neighborhood library. Our plan is to move forward with all the projects as we originally intended."

E-mail Kathleen Sullivan at ksullivan@sfchronicle.com.

Branch Library timetable

- Grand Reopening in July: Excelsior.
- Currently closed for renovation: West Portal.
- Closing for renovation this summer: Marina and Sunset.
- Closing for renovation this fall: Noe Valley and Western Addition.
- Renovation beginning in 2006: Bernal Heights, Eureka Valley, Ortega, Potrero, Richmond.
- Renovation beginning in 2007-2008: Parkside, Anza, Golden Gate Valley, Merced, Bayview, Presidio, North Beach, Park.
- For more information, see www.sfpl.lib.ca.us and click on "Branch Renovations & Construction."

Preschool may have home