

# Excelsior News

Volume VII, Number 1

March 1994

## Excelsior Youth Club's Goal to Revitalize Neighborhood

by Alan Mills

Members and founders of the Excelsior Youth Club (EYC) believe that providing teenagers and young adults with positive alternatives to violence, substance abuse and vandalism is the major building block for revitalizing the entire neighborhood. After years of frustration, the young men and women of the Excelsior now have reason to be optimistic that their needs can finally be addressed.

On February 17th, EYC representatives met with Martha Cohen, a business and community services assistant in the mayor's office, Erica Henri, Deputy Director of Community Services, and Melba Maldonado of the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice. Club president Nicholas Conti acted as spokesman at the meeting and outlined the long and short range goals of EYC.

Also attending were three club advisors, Jim Espinoza, Daniel Perez, Jr, and Carlos Martinez, Assistant Pastor of the Assembly of God Church. Church Pastor Edward Stewart and Sharon Espinoza were also present. Both sides feel the meeting was productive. Cohen, Henri, and Maldonado were impressed with Conti's presentation and EYC's commitment to improve the quality of life for all citizens in the Excelsior. Ms. Cohen is the liaison between the mayor's office and the Excelsior. According to Espinoza, the most tangible benefit of the meeting was obtaining information about non-profit status, assistance in writing grant proposals, and discovering specific funding sources.

Originally formed in 1979, but defunct for about 14 years, the club was

## Mayor's Office Supports Amendments to Planning Code

by Marion Aird

Representatives from the League of San Francisco and the Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods, two umbrella organizations representing over 60 San Francisco neighborhood associations, have been meeting with the Mayor's Office since October 1993 to review the neighborhoods' proposed Amendment to the Planning Code. The neighborhood association are dissatisfied with the proposed Residential Conservation Controls (R.C.C.) devel-

oped by the Planning Department. They have voiced their arguments against the R. C. C. at numerous Planning Commission hearings. The neighborhoods' Amendment addresses widespread concerns that are not addressed by the R. C. C.

Some concerns of the neighborhoods include:

a. Encroachment into rear yard open space.

See Page 4

## Calendar and Notices

**Neighbors of the Excelsior General Membership Meeting, Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 PM, at the Excelsior Clubhouse, Madrid and Russia.** Supervisor Kevin Shelley and Ingleside Station Police Capt. Wilson will attend. We also will elect our Board of Directors for 1994. Please come and support your neighborhood group.

**Excelsior Youth Club Meeting, Every Monday, 7 pm, Assembly of God Church, Ocean and San Jose Avenues.**

**Native Plant Work in McLaren Park, the 2nd Saturday of every month, 10 AM to 2 PM.** The next one is March 12. Meet east of the Crocker Amazon Playing Fields, north of Geneva Ave.

**Native Plant Walks:** Sunday, March 20, 10 AM, on San Bruno Mountain, and Saturday, April 9, at 10 AM, in McLaren Park. See Page 6 or call 585-6506 for details.

### The Inside Story

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## Excelsior Youth Club, from p. 1

reborn last August in the wake of the tragic shootings of two Excelsior youths in a span of less than one month. After the second tragedy, Jim Espinoza, age 43 and a lifelong resident of the Excelsior, realized that the community had to provide social and recreational outlets for neighborhood youth in order to stem the rising tide of violence and anti-social behavior. Espinoza realized that the community had to begin a process of self-healing before positive action could be taken. The first few club meetings were opportunities for people to deal with their grief, make a commitment to unify the neighborhood, and end the violence.

Espinoza, Perez, Martinez, and Tim Sullivan are the adult advisors of EYC whose 70 members range in age from 14 to 25 years old. Tim is the older brother of Brian Sullivan, who was 22 years old when he was fatally shot by a San Francisco police officer. Club officers, in addition to president Conti, are D'Andrei Walker, vice-president; Diane Wunderlich, secretary; and Enilda Saucchi, treasurer. The advisors serve only as consultants, and decisions are made by the membership. Hank and Esther Leon, parents of Eddie Leon, who was killed during a confrontation with another youth last spring, are very active in the club. The Leons attend all of the club meetings and Mrs. Leon provides all of the food — no small feat considering the fact that as many as 50 or 60 people attend the weekly meetings. Mrs. Leon and club member Angelica Fierro collaborated to produce the crafts for the Christmas Fest '93 on December 18th; Mr. Leon provided the hot dogs. However, like all of the adults involved with EYC, the Leons refuse to accept credit for their important contributions, and instead deflect praise back onto the youth.

Mrs. Leon says that she is excited to "see the kids doing something positive for the community and for themselves."

The desire to give something back to the community is a theme that is repeatedly heard when talking to the youth or adults involved in EYC. Tim Sullivan, who was raised in the Excelsior, is alarmed when he reflects on the few social and recreational opportunities available today for young people in the neighborhood. Sullivan and Conti feel that the Excelsior District has not been treated fairly by the City in the budget allocations for youth recreation facilities. As Conti says, "The Excelsior has been ignored for too long, and we need recreation programs for kids and summer jobs for youth." The lack of social and recreation outlets for neighborhood youngsters seems especially appalling to many residents when one realizes that the Excelsior has one of the highest percentages of school-age children of any neighborhood in the city.

Besides enhancing community pride and self-esteem in neighborhood youth, club members can point with pride to some concrete achievements, including a \$600 contribution to the Leon family for a tombstone for their son and raising about \$4200 for Brian Sullivan's funeral expenses. Daniel Perez, Jr. was instrumental in raising funds from local merchants, plus a \$100 EYC contribution, for uniforms for the Balboa High School girls basketball team. Approximately 350 neighborhood youth participated in a "3 on 3" basketball tournament in October which raised \$1,300 from t-shirts sales, entry

fees and contributions from 86 neighborhood merchants. Club members' contributions were used to feed seven needy families last Thanksgiving. A Christmas Fest staged by EYC on December 18th at Excelsior Playground drew 300 neighborhood residents. All children under the age of 12 received free gifts. That event also featured a flag football tournament, food, crafts, a Christmas tree raffle, pinatas and games, and the opportunity for children to be photographed with Santa Claus. Most recently, Jim Espinoza and 15 club members participated in a neighborhood graffiti paintout on February 12th, which was attended by Mayor Jordan. The mayor presented Espinoza with a certificate honoring him for his work with the youth of the Excelsior.

However, the energetic young men and women of the EYC and their advisors are not ready to rest on their laurels. Espinoza reports that the club intends to set up a car wash to be operated by club members in order to help raise money for a summer carnival at Excelsior Playground. The proposed carnival, which he estimates would cost about \$2,000 to stage, would include live music, bingo, game booths with prizes, a basketball tournament, and possibly rides. Espinoza hopes to fund the carnival from the car wash and private contributions. Espinoza and everyone connected with EYC is extremely appreciative of the generous support from the 86 neighborhood merchants who have donated to the club.

*See Page 3*



Excelsior Youth Club members gather at the Excelsior Playground

## Planning Department, from page 1

b. Complicated regulations and excessive loopholes resulting in delays and increased costs to Planning Department staff, developers, and homeowners.

c. Poor control of demolitions resulting in a reduction of affordable housing stock.

d. Inappropriate height limits.

At a meeting held on January 18, 1994, with Jim Wunderman, Chief of Administration for Mayor Jordan and representatives from neighborhood associations, Mr. Wunderman assured the neighborhood associations that the Mayor's office would recommend that the Planning Commission table the Residential Conservation Controls in its present form. Mayor Jordan has been very responsive to the neighborhoods regarding Residential Rezoning.

To ensure that the Planning Department will be cost efficient and to simplify the application and approval procedure. Mr. Wunderman indicated that Mayor Jordan will recommend amending the Planning Code in order to establish building envelope size parameters, establish new levels of restriction and demonstrate public support of Proposition M. The Mayor has stated that he wants zoning to be responsive to neighborhood character and simple to understand.

The representatives from the San Francisco League of Neighborhoods extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr. Jim Wunderman, Chief of Administration; Ms. Erica Henri, Office of the Mayor, and Planning Department staff for their attention and courtesy at our many joint meetings.

## Youth Club, from p. 2

Conti and vice-president Walker would like to see a neighborhood multi-service center in the Excelsior, similar to the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center of the Western Addition and the Mission Recreation Center. The items on their wish list for such a facility include vocational training and job placement services, substance abuse education, tutorial services, and a fully equipped gymnasium and recreation facility.

Conti says the club needs volunteers, especially persons experienced in fund raising and working with teens and young adults. Prospective volunteers may contact Sharon or Jim Espinoza at 239-0423. Anyone wishing to make a financial contribution to the club should contact Vicky Luna at Bank of America on Mission Street, at Ocean Avenue, where EYC has an account. The president emphasizes that the club is run by the youth, and the adult advisors serve only in a consulting capacity.

Assembly of God Church, corner of Ocean and San Jose Avenues, has temporarily donated space for EYC meetings until renovation of the Excelsior Clubhouse is completed. The public is welcome to attend on Monday evenings at 7 p.m.

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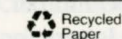
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*The Excelsior News* is published by Neighbors of the Excelsior (NOTE), a neighborhood group dedicated to improving the quality of life for all residents of the Excelsior District. Annual dues are \$10 per person, which includes a subscription to *The Excelsior News*. Please send your check to NOTE, P. O. Box 12236, San Francisco, CA 94112.

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**Distribution and Ad Sales:** Marion Aird and Alan Mills

**Contributors:** Alan Mills, Jo Coffey, Joe Sugg, Lois Miyashiro, Marion Aird

The March 1994 issue of the *Excelsior News* will be distributed free of charge to about 5,000 homes in the Excelsior District by volunteers from Neighbors of the Excelsior and the Excelsior Youth Club.

**Letters to the Editor:**

*The Excelsior News* welcomes Letters to the Editor on any and all topics. Please send your typed letters to the Post Office Box listed above. To be published, letters must include your name, address, and telephone number. *The Excelsior News* reserves the right to edit letters for publishing purposes.

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**Editorials**

**What's left of our Library?**

The San Francisco Library System has taken budget cut after budget cut. It is now operating with fewer dollars that it was just a few years ago. And all this after San Franciscans approved a tough-to-pass bond issue authorizing the building of a new Main Branch! We wonder what all that's going to mean for those of us living in the Excelsior. Sure, we will be able to travel downtown to visit a state-of-the-art library. But will we be able to stroll down Mission Street to visit our local branch? We urge all Excelsior residents to help pass a Charter Amendment to guarantee our Library System a fair share of the City's budget.

**Free Street Trees, for the Excelsior!!**

Yes, you can plant a tree in the sidewalk in front of your home, ABSOLUTELY FREE!! The Friends of the Urban Forest received grant money for tree plantings in several San Franciscos neighborhoods. Because they did not receive enough requests in those areas, they have extended their plantings to the Excelsior, and they are paying for everything—cutting the hole in the sidewalk, buying the trees, supplying the stakes and other items needed. All we have to do is get together groups of about 30 neighbors, within about 6-8 blocks of one another. Neighbors of the Excelsior has organized street tree plantings in the past, but many of our members simply couldn't afford the costs. Well, now, nobody has that excuse!! We urge all interested citizens of the Excelsior to get something for nothing and help our neighborhood become a better place to live at the same time. Many trees are available, possibly thousands. What a deal!! Call Betty Olafson at 585-0306 to sign up.

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## Charter Amendment to Save Library

by Joe Sugg

Our Excelsior Branch Library service has been service chopped almost in half in the last six years—from 55 open hours and three evenings per week, to 34 open hours and one evening. The book budget has gone from \$40,000 down to \$22,000 (minus annual inflation). The other branch libraries and the Main Library departments have undergone equally drastic reductions. The Library's part of the City budget has gone from approximately 1% down to 0.58%.

Now the Mayor's budget guidelines for the new fiscal year call for another cut of up to \$1.9 million (plus inflation and built-in cost increases).

Many Excelsior residents signed the Library charter amendment petition circulated in January and February by Save San Francisco Libraries (563-8696) and Library TNT (The Neighborhoods Together) (985-7456).

The June ballot measure would require the City to fund the Library at 1985-86 levels, to maintain the 26 branch libraries, and to hold hearings in the each neighborhood to determine the hours and programs the neighborhood wants.

Additionally, to accomplish these service levels, 2.5 cents per hundred dollars property valuation would be set aside for libraries, with no increase in property taxes. This would restore the percentage of the budget that the Library had previously.

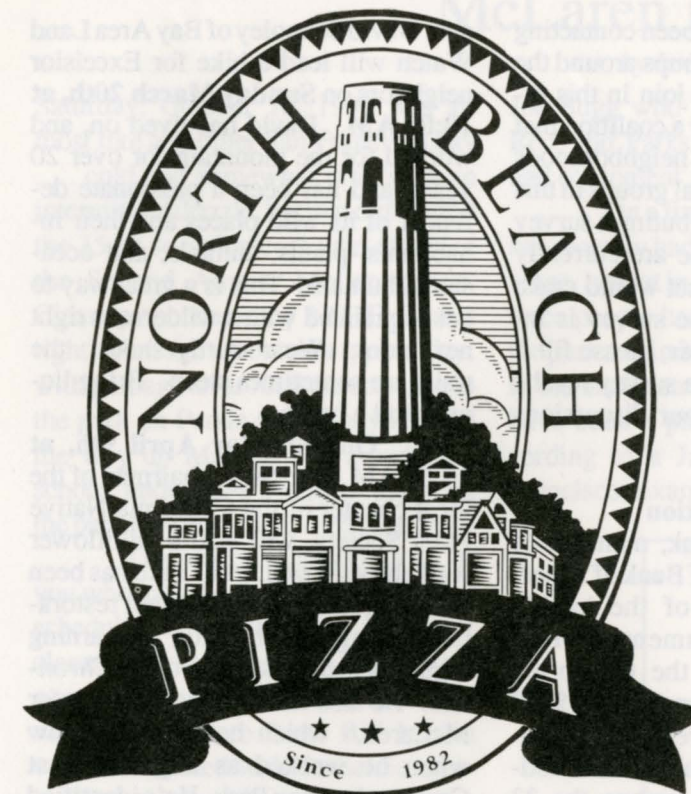
The Board of Supervisors in January passed a resolution backing full funding for libraries. Since the Mayor's office writes the budget, and the Supervisors cannot add to the budget except for capital improvements, passage of the Library charter amendment is the only way to keep the public library services San Francisco has had, and improve them some.

### Tax Help at the Library

Every Saturday from March 5 through April 9, from 10 AM to 2 PM, VITA TAX assistance volunteers will be in the Excelsior Branch Library meeting room, helping seniors and people with low income with the Federal Form 1040

### Poetry Workshops at Library

Poetry Writing Workshops for Teens, from March 8 through May 3, at 4 PM each Tuesday, in the Library meeting room. These workshops will be led by professional poets of various ethnic and language backgrounds, to assist participants in writing poetry both in English and in other languages.



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# McLaren Park News

by Jo Coffey

Some years ago, a friend from another part of the city took a run through McLaren Park. He came back expressing surprise that such a wonderful place, right in the city, was so little known. It is surprising. Go to Golden Gate Park, the only park in the city larger than McLaren, and you find scores, hundreds, sometimes thousands of people enjoying its many and varied pleasures. You can walk through McLaren, even on a weekend, and be as alone as if you were in the wilderness. But it's not a wilderness. Walking through McLaren isn't like hiking in the Sierra or in the canyons of San Bruno Mountain just south of here. They're true wilderness. McLaren is a park, and it needs people. If it doesn't get them it becomes, not wild, but abandoned, a dumping ground for trash, and, as has been happening recently, dead bodies. A sorry cycle is established. Afraid of the park, people stay away. This isolation invites crime, which reinforces and strengthens the fear, which leads to greater isolation, and more crime.

We have to break this cycle. City people need parks. They need a place nearby where they can get out in the open, away from the concrete. This is particularly true of people whose opportunities for getting away are limited--people not in upper income brackets, people with children--and that describes people who live in this section of the city.

McLaren neighbors have worked for years to do something about the park. Recently, residents, neighborhood groups, and the city have organized trash and graffiti cleanups, Honda patrols, etc., and these have helped. But we need to do more. We have to work with the city to identify and implement a vision for this under-appreciated jewel in our midst.

The NOTE Board has begun a major effort for McLaren. We have written to the Recreation and Parks Department to learn what the City Master Plan proposes for McLaren, what funds have been allocated for improvements or maintenance, with the aim of working with them on plans

for the Park. We have been contacting other neighborhood groups around the Park, inviting them to join in this effort. We want to gather a coalition that reflects the different neighborhoods and the different cultural groups in this area. We are also distributing a survey to find out how people are currently using the park, and what would make them use it more. The survey is included in this newsletter; please fill it out and mail it in. The survey results will be important in our discussions with the City.

## Native Plant Restoration

Thanks to Kent Dymak, manager of the Excelsior branch of Bank of America, NOTE learned of the bank's Community Environmental Grant program, and, with the California Native Plant Society, applied for \$750 for our McLaren native plant restoration work. Last December, Kent notified us that we were among the 33 groups statewide selected to receive a grant. We're very grateful both to Kent and the Bank of America for this 'seed money', which we will use for tools and plant propagation equipment.

The McLaren native plant restoration folks were featured in a San Francisco native species exhibit this winter, at the Randall Museum.

The restoration group has been meeting every month since last April. You can find us between 10 and 2 on the second Saturday of the month, cutting back fennel and other invasive weeds, planting native seedlings, gathering seeds. These days, we're working on the slopes just up from Geneva, east of the Crocker Amazon playing fields. Come join us. It's good exercise, you meet your neighbors, and it's fun. For more information, or to get on our mailing list, call 585-6506.

## Native Plant Walks - San Bruno Mountain, McLaren

Native plants really strut their stuff in Spring, and if you want to see them with an expert guide, take one or both of these free hikes:

There are places in San Bruno Mountain that still look like what our part of San Francisco looked like long

ago. David Schooley of Bay Area Land Watch will lead a hike for Excelsior neighbors on **Sunday March 20th, at 10:00 AM**. David has lived on, and worked for the mountain for over 20 years, and has been a passionate defender of its wild places and their inhabitants--plants, animals, and occasional humans. This is a great way to get acquainted with a wilderness right next door. Wear sturdy shoes; the trails are sometimes steep. Bring liquids and a lunch.

On **Saturday April 9th, at 10:00 AM**, Jake Sigg, chairman of the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society, will lead a wildflower walk through McLaren. Jake has been a leading force in native plant restoration throughout the city, appearing regularly in the *Examiner* or the *Chronicle*. He also has a particular love for McLaren, which he came to know when he worked as a gardener at Crocker Amazon Park. He's identified over 60 native plants in the Park, and we're sure to see a substantial number that day. We did this walk last year in the pouring rain. We hope for better weather this year, and if we get it, we'll have a picnic at the end of the walk. Bring food if you'd like, although we'll have plenty.

Since we'll be looking at some tiny plants on these hikes, we want to keep the groups small (you don't want to be the one at the edge of the crowd straining to hear the name of, or catch a glimpse of that rare whatsis). Call 585-6506 to reserve a space and for meeting arrangements. No one will be turned away. If we have more people than can be accommodated on a single trip, we will arrange other trips.

## Get a Free Tree!!

**Friends of the Urban Forest has lots of trees, and they are free! Concrete breaking and hole boring included!**

**Call Betty Olafson at 585-0306 for details!**

# Neighbors of the Excelsior Sponsors 2nd Annual McLaren Park Cleanup

by Lois Miyashiro

Saturday, October 16, 1993 was almost like any other San Francisco day... cold and somewhat gray with an intermittent drizzle, but that didn't stop the 15 or so volunteers who attended the Second Annual McLaren Park Cleanup sponsored by NOTE. That's right, what started out as a typical day, with garbage all around the entrance to the park on Persia and Sunnysdale, on the way up Mansell and around the school, ended as a beautiful day with the park looking bright, clean and new!

Our sincerest thanks to all of you who took the time out of your busy schedules to help with this important cleanup effort. It couldn't have happened without your enthusiasm! We would also like to thank Bill Martin who coordinated with Sunset Scavenger in obtaining the two debris boxes and brought sodas for the thirsty, and

Joe Sugg who arranged with the SF Rec. and Parks for the garbage bags and equipment.

On a final note, McLaren Park has recently had its share of press coverage, but not in a positive light. In fact, three people have been found dead in the park and in January, a man was shot in the back near the park in what may have been a possible carjacking, according to a January 23, 1994 San Francisco Examiner article. In addition to this, during the park cleanup,

two beautiful gray-white owls were found shot to death. One of the owls was slightly decomposed, but the other looked as if it had just recently been shot. Please let's all work together to put a stop to this outrageous violence in McLaren Park - get involved and join NOTE today. A membership form is on the back page of this newsletter.

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## McLaren Park Survey

Please fill out and mail in the Neighbors of the Excelsior Membership form

**How often do you go to McLaren Park? (mark one):**

Every day  
Once a week  
Once in a while  
Never

**What do you do in the park? (mark all that apply):**

Walk, walk with dogs  
Bike  
Picnic  
Use children's playgrounds  
Photograph  
Trash cleanup  
Graffiti cleanup  
Native Plant Restoration  
Garden  
Other (please specify):

on the other side of this Survey.

**What would make you use the park more?**

Please rate these items on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). Be sure to add your own ideas!

Improved safety	1 2 3 4 5	Skateboard/Roller-blading facilities	1 2 3 4 5
Better maintenance (trash removal, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5	Playing Fields	1 2 3 4 5
Summer day camp	1 2 3 4 5	Guided nature walks	1 2 3 4 5
Children's super-playground	1 2 3 4 5	Other ideas:	
Public events (concerts, fairs)	1 2 3 4 5		
Roller skating rink	1 2 3 4 5		
Ice skating rink	1 2 3 4 5		



# MUNI to Recommend LRV on Third Street

by Marion Aird

After a year long study that included 17 community meetings MUNI will recommend on how to proceed with service improvements in the Bayshore/Third Street corridor in the southeastern part of the city.

Based on the Bayshore Corridor System Planning Study Final Report, MUNI will ask the Public Utilities Commission to authorize further development

of four light-rail transit alternatives for Third Street. All of these alternatives include extending the MUNI LRV service up Geneva Avenue to the Balboa Park BART Station, which would certainly benefit Excelsior residents.

The recommendations will be to proceed through the federal Alternatives Analysis process making the project eligible for federal funds.

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## Neighbors of the Excelsior Membership Form

Please fill out and mail in the Neighbors of the Excelsior McLaren Park Survey on the other side of this Membership Form

### Join! Renew! Participate!

### NOTE Membership Form

Annual Membership of \$10 per person. Mail this form along with your check to NOTE, P. O. Box 12236, San Francisco, CA 94112.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> McLaren Park         | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Writing and Distribution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalk Trees       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission/Merchant Outreach           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic & Parking    | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Development              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Issues      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                         |