



## The Woolworth Building The Ongoing Saga

by Patty DeVlieg

Woolworth's at 4550 Mission Street closed its doors in the 1990's, and the building was for many years a vacant eyesore in our commercial district. Several years ago the site was purchased by a developer who started work on a plan to demolish the old building and redevelop the site with a new mixed-use development of residential over commercial space.

Two years ago, Mr. Tom Walsh, the project developer, with his architect Toby Levy, came to EDIA and other community groups with a building design with 6800 sq. ft. of commercial space on the ground floor, 3 floors above of 17 residential units, and a total of 24 parking spaces. The proposed project was within the current 40-foot height zoning limit at that location. Of the 17 units, 2 units would be "affordable housing" as required by City statute. The residential parking requirement of 1 space per unit could be easily accommodated with the 24 parking spaces. However, because the Planning Code requires a commercial space over 5000 square feet to provide 12 units of parking (which could not be accommodated at the site), the developer asked for community groups to support a waiver on the commercial parking requirement so that the commercial space would not be limited to 5000 square feet. At that time, EDIA and other community groups supported the project and the commercial parking waiver.

Meanwhile, "Furniture 4 Less" moved into the existing building, and has been a successful business tenant for

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## EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

THE VOICE OF THE RESIDENTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE

EXCELSIOR DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1942 – Incorporated in 1962



The 56 foot elevation (plan 3)

the last couple of years. We are all happy to see "Furniture 4 Less" thrive at that location, and yet we are anxious for the redevelopment of the site to proceed.

Over the last two years the developer has been unsuccessful in moving the project through the City Planning process. Supervisor Sandoval's office has taken a lead role in pressing the developer for a larger project with two main goals: 1) an increased height (by eight feet) to provide for a more viable commercial space on the ground floor; and 2) an additional story (adding another 8 feet) to provide for increased residential density and more affordable units. The developer responded with 2 revised plans: The first is the original 4-story and 17-residential unit proposal with an increased commercial height (48 feet total building height); the second is a 5-story building (56 feet total building height), with the increased commercial space height, 24 residential units of which 4 would be affordable, and 24 parking spaces; the fourth affordable unit is 1 more than City statute requires.

In the interest of breaking the planning stalemate and reaching community consensus on the preferred alternative, EDIA and EAG collaborated on sponsoring a Town Hall meeting on Saturday, November 17, which many of you attended. Over 80 community residents, merchants, City Planning and other officials, including Supervisor Sandoval, and other stakeholders attended to hear the developer present the 3 proposals (the original

Woolworth continued on page 4

# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

## More Effective Transit Proposed for Excelsior – and EDIA is at the forefront of changes

By Linda Anne Harwood-Fini

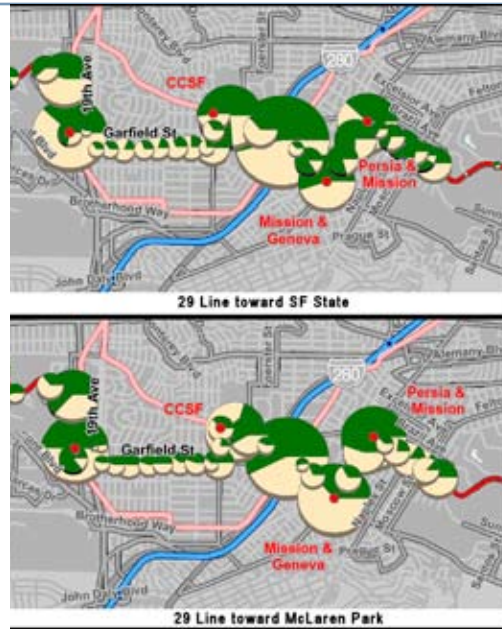
I'll admit to being a semi-professional public transit rider. I rely on MUNI, BART, my own two feet--and the occasional cab ride--to move me around our city. I need these to be in place and working effectively, or like Blanche in Streetcar Named Desire, I am forced to be "reliant on the kindness of strangers." While EDIA members and other friends indeed are kind – I hate to have to ask for the rides. So.... transit patterns in a neighborhood are one of the first things I look at to determine if a neighborhood is a good one. And I don't think I am alone.

When I moved into the Excelsior I was astonished to find out how extensive the neighborhood's transit system was and how well the transportation network serves our community. But sometimes it felt like the reality just didn't live up to the promise. I'm not MUNI bashing – but I noticed that the routes seemed sort of convoluted... and the transit patterns seemed.... well, odd. The buses didn't go where I wanted them to – or took a long time to get there. The bus lines that had the most people using them didn't get the bigger busses. When the buses came, they were full... and all too often, they would get stuck in double-park purgatory along the Mission corridor. But, even with the problems, Excelsior District transit worked. Given enough time, one really could get from here to the rest of the City and beyond.

My ears perked up when last year representatives of the 'Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP)' were invited to address us at EDIA. As they showed us slides and discussed their project, I was reminded of a quip my mother used to repeat 20 years ago, "MUNI buses travel in packs for safety and huddle together for warmth." I never thought anyone would be able to document her comment, so I was astonished to see that the data they had collected matched up my observations and those of my mother. They had correctly identified the volume of usage and the problem spots. Check it out for yourself: [www.sfmta.com/tepdata](http://www.sfmta.com/tepdata)

As I looked at the pictures, I wondered what I as a single individual could do... and then I remembered, it isn't just the voice of one person – what was needed was people working together.... Something we do in EDIA very well.

EDIA members put in time and effort on this – we sent



Sample TEP data for the 29-Line showing how many passengers board or alight at each bus stop through the Excelsior

in commentary, included a petition requesting some changes and people from our organization went to meetings and working sessions.

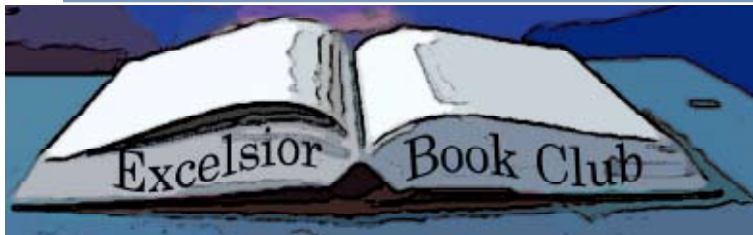
What was the result – did we have an impact? In February 2008 the new TEP proposals came out for public comment. The Excelsior is one of the areas that will be getting a fantastic transit boost. It is clear that they have looked at the way we ride MUNI and BART and what would benefit those who live and work here.

What are some of the proposed changes that would be helpful for our residents? Look at what is proposed:

- ♦ More frequent 14L service (including weekends and nights!) AND a new 49L line connecting us with the Van Ness corridor with limited-stop service!
- ♦ 14 Mission will go to Daly City BART!
- ♦ An improved 28L will connect us at Geneva and Mission with rapid minimal-stop service to SFSU/Stonestown and with the Sunset Richmond and Marina Districts!
- ♦ 52 Line will be more direct, and will connect us with BART at both Glen Park AND Balboa Park Bart stations!
- ♦ 29 and 54 now will go down Ocean Avenue to Balboa Park Station, and the 29 will also go out to the Sunset and Richmond and SF State!
- ♦ The J Church will go between SF State and downtown via Balboa Park and Glen Park, providing much better access in both directions for our neighborhood!

Frequency and reliability concerns are also being taken into consideration.

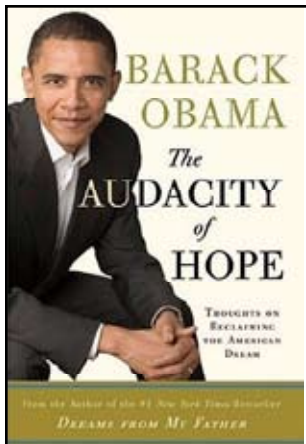
The proposals may not be perfect—but no solution will ever be 100% effective. However, this is a huge start, and EDIA was very involved in making this happen. Our voices are indeed being heard.



HELLO MEMBERS and FRIENDS OF  
THE EXCELSIOR BOOK CLUB

Our next meeting of the Excelsior Book Club will be WEDNESDAY, March 19, 7:00 PM, at the home of Baruch Golden, 566 Lisbon Street, (between Russia and France).

In March we are going topical with the man everyone is talking about, by reading Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006, 384 pages). There are many copies available at the SF Library, although most of them are checked out. This book is HOT HOT HOT ! It can be purchased at most bookstores (list price \$14.95) or at Amazon for \$8.22. On February 10, Mr. Obama won the spoken word Grammy for the audiobook version (abridged) of the book, which marked his second Grammy statuette, following a win in 2006 for the audiobook of *Dreams From My Father*, first published in 1995. The audiobook is in theory available at the SF Library, but all copies were checked out when I looked; it is available from Amazon for \$17.97.



Cover Photo Courtesy Crown Publishing Group

With his second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama engages themes raised in his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, shares personal views on faith and values and offers a vision of the future that involves repairing a "political process that is broken" and restoring a government that has fallen out of touch with the people. Obama writes insightfully, with vivid firsthand observations about politics and the compromises forced on politicians by fund-raising, interest groups, the media and legislative horse-trading. His proposals bear the stamp of those compromises: he's skeptical of big government and of Republican tax cuts for the rich and Social Security privatization; he's pro-choice, but respectful of pro-lifers; supportive of religion, but not of imposing it.

For more information and links to other information check out the book club tab at <http://excelsiorsf.org>

*Patty*

# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

## Neighbors and Friends

### Victims of Costly Vandalism

Several streets around the neighborhood have had car tires slashed. We are aware of events around the Manila Oriental Market and on Silver, on Madrid and also Lisbon. Several people have reported these incidents to the Ingleside Station but apparently not enough to receive special attention. The officers contacted at the station said they have had few reports about this particular problem. One officer suggested that awareness is the best defense at this point and thinks that flyers going out to the neighbors and on poles are a good idea. It should say something like

"Notify SFPD at: 553-0123 or call 311"

and make them aware of the vandalism. Another suggestion was to start a Crime watch. The services are free. We will be inviting San Francisco Safe to an EDIA meeting to teach people how to be more aware, how to give a good description etc... Their number is: 673-SAFE or 673-7233

**News Flash:** The flyers have been printed up by EDIA supporter Debbie and are being distributed in several languages. Members are encouraged let their friends and neighbors know about the Community Meeting at:

**Ingleside Station. Tuesday, March 18th at 7:00 p.m.**

We will have Flyers on our web site for people to download and share with friends and neighbors. (See address below)

four flats" by davidnikonvscanon



Check out our web site for a lot of information  
about our neighborhood

<http://excelsiorsf.org>

# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

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40-foot design, and the 2 revised proposals). Each attendee received color-coded adhesive “dots” to be used for voting “yea” or “nay” on each of the revised proposals. The color-coding indicated whether a voter was a District 11 resident (green), an Excelsior merchant or property holder (blue), an Excelsior worker (orange), or an interested stakeholder (yellow). Mr. Paul Rose was the able moderator for the discussion, and his job was not easy with the many excellent questions and heartfelt opinions being expressed.

After almost 2 hours of discussion, we voted on the following 2 questions:

1) Do you support the building height to be increased by eight (8) feet to allow for a higher commercial ceiling height? (Result: 56 votes YES; 0 votes NO)

2) Do you support the building height to be increased by sixteen (16) feet so that there are six to seven (6-7) more units (1/3 of the increased number of units would be affordable)? (Result: 55 votes YES (38 residents, 3 merchants/property owners, 3 workers, 11 stakeholders); 19 votes NO (16 residents, 1 worker, 1 stakeholder).)

Following the Town Hall, both EAG and EDIA agreed to convene a joint subcommittee of representatives from both groups to iron out the details of the alternative that achieved community consensus. That subcommittee first of all concurred that the community’s collective opinion, although not unanimous, was in favor of supporting the 5-story proposal with a 56-foot building height. This proposal will require the developer to pursue a Building Code variance from City Planning.

As to specific details, respecting community concerns expressed at the Town Hall, the primary issue was maximizing the availability of affordable units. There were also serious concerns regarding mitigating the lack of parking for the commercial tenant; for attracting a viable long-term tenant if “Furniture 4 Less” decides not to occupy the commercial space; for addressing urban design and public safety concerns; and for seeking support for establishment of a Community Benefit District (CBD) along the Mission Street commercial corridor.

After much thought, discussion, negotiation and re-negotiation, all sides compromised on an agreement that will benefit our community with a new signature building, with 4 affordable units (one 3 BR, two 2 BR’s and one 1BR) for purchase at an overall average median income (AMI) affordability of 95% of AMI (2 units at 100%

and 2 units at 90% AMI); or for rental at 80% AMI.

By way of example, 2007 Median Income statistics for the City & County of San Francisco define the average median income for a family size of 3 at \$57,850 at 80% AMI and \$72,300 at 100% AMI. The corresponding sale price for a 2-bedroom unit is \$167,416 at 80% AMI and \$226,244 at 100% AMI. Should the developer choose to rent instead of sell, depending on the market conditions at the time, the rental price at 80% AMI (with utilities) are currently \$1,285 for a 1-BR; \$1,446 for a 2-BR; and \$1,606 for a 3-BR. More information on affordable housing statistics can be found on the web site of the Mayor’s Office of Housing at [http://www.sf.gov/site/moh\\_index.asp](http://www.sf.gov/site/moh_index.asp)

Supervisor Sandoval’s aide, Nick Kinsey, was present at the final meeting with the developer, where the agreement was reached, and confirmed that the Supervisor would support the community consensus agreement.

Although not everyone at the table was entirely satisfied with this level of affordability, or with resolution on the issues of parking and urban design, we all agreed we had a good agreement and it was time to end the negotiation and move forward in the spirit of good faith negotiation. The Supervisor’s Office may be able to assist the developer in expediting the required height variance request with the City Attorney and City Planning. The Supervisor’s Office may also be able to assist in working with DPT (Department of Parking and Traffic) in mitigating



the parking concerns. In particular, there is interest in exploring the potential of optimizing usage of the City parking lot behind the building site.

We thank all the participants in the November 17 Town Hall, which was an excellent demonstration of the community’s commitment to this project, and a good example of collaboration among community groups.

At this point, we are hopeful that the community’s  
**Woolworth continued on page 6**

# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

also non-tiling jobs available. They encourage people to stop by and participate or just come see the progress and encourage the volunteers.

The current schedule is EVERY SATURDAY (that it is not raining) from 11am –5pm. Starting the last week of March (March 29-30), volunteer days will be on both Saturday and Sunday. For more information, call 415.748.1516 or email [info@facesf.com](mailto:info@facesf.com).

Please come be a part of this exciting project and leave a visual legacy in our great neighborhood!



Sonja

## Update on the Crocker-Amazon Mosaic Tile Project

By Paige Nittler

As many of you may know, Friends & Advocates of Crocker-Amazon and Excelsior (FACE) was awarded a Community Challenge Grant to decorate four benches and a boat structure with mosaic tile artwork at the Crocker-Amazon playground (corner of Geneva and Moscow streets). Led by the non-profit arts group, Precita Eyes, and aided by fiscal sponsor NPC (Neighborhood Parks Council), neighbors of all ages came together to design the murals last spring. The murals contain themes about the Excelsior, such as popular landmarks (water tower, Geneva office building, etc.), as well as other topics of interest to the participants. Once the murals were approved by the city, the project was formally initiated last October. Since then, neighbors have been excited to see the artwork take shape.

Neighbors have been regularly meeting on weekends to assemble and grout the murals. Three benches are finished and add tremendous visual appeal to the park. They take what would be a drab, ordinary playground and make it a unique, lively local treasure. The benches add color around the perimeter of the playground and remind all of us of the many people who live in and love the Excelsior. The project has also been a great opportunity for neighbors to get to know one another.

While great progress is being made, there is still much to be accomplished. Volunteers have now begun work on the 4th bench and will initiate work on the large boat sandbox later this spring. The leaders of the project say they can always use help and there are many kinds of jobs. Participants can add tile directly to benches or grout tile that has been laid. Alternatively, the tiles can be added to netting while sitting at picnic tables. For people who find it hard to sit on or near the ground, this can be much more comfortable. There are



Sonja



### Transit continued from page 2

A special thanks to those members of EDIA who sent in feedback, spoke at our meetings and/or attended the feedback sessions. Several members of EDIA directly influenced the route of the 52 line, and made suggestions that were incorporated into the changes, including the request to connect us more effectively to DC BART and for more reliable service along the 44 line. The 44 route is being kept and additional buses during the day and in the evening are to be included in the changes, which should help with reliability.

What comes next? These proposals are suggested to start summer 2009. EDIA will continue to put in suggestions into this process – so now we need to hear from you. What do you think of these ideas? Do you like the changes proposed? Can you think of some additional improvements? This is the time to let your voice be heard – and all of our voices can be heard through EDIA.

An interesting and arrestingly beautiful jewel box art show consisting of work created by children of the Excelsior at the 2007 Excelsior Festival is now on display at another little treasure - Mama' Art Café at 4754 Mission Street.

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opinion will be heard, and that the project will be expedited through the Planning process so that construction can begin within 18 months, if not sooner.

## YOU CAN STILL HELP

If you support this agreement and want to see the project move forward as quickly as possible, you can contact Supervisor Sandoval's office by email at: [Gerardo.sandoval@sfgov.org](mailto:Gerardo.sandoval@sfgov.org)

Or by phone to Nick Kinsey 554-6978; or Luke Klipp 554-6977; or by mail at:

Gerardo Sandoval  
City Hall  
1. Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
Room #244  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Desiree M



Spring at Don Chuy's



## Hey guys, here's one for the little guys

Comment from the president of EDIA

If you just read Linda's great Transit article you know that the SF TEP (Transit Effectiveness Project) proposals are out.

Take a look at: <http://www.sftep.com/docs.html>

The proposal for the 52-Excelsior would do what we had asked for, extending the 52 to both BART stations: Balboa Park as well as Glen Park, in addition to running through the entire neighborhood. The change would be running 2 ways on Naples, instead of one-way on Naples and one-way on Moscow. (There are other changes elsewhere on the line, outside of the neighborhood.) The 54 would be rerouted down Persia & Ocean, serving Balboa Park Station from the south end, where BART is constructing a new entrance. The 29 would be rerouted down Ocean (instead of turning onto Mission), serving Balboa Park Station from the south end.

We should celebrate this victory and send a letter of support to the TEP project!

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## What and Where is EDIA?

We are a non-profit neighborhood organization working for civic improvement and the general welfare of our district and the city of San Francisco, since 1942.

**From the Newsletter Editor:** We welcome your comments and submissions. If you have articles, photos or other art work you would like to submit, or comments or suggestions please leave a voice message or send a FAX to 415-295-3034 or e-mail us:

ediasf-info@yahoo.com

### EDIA Meeting & Location Information

We meet on the 4th Tuesday of every month

7:00 p.m. at 45 Santa Rosa Street in the basement - see map below

Meetings are scheduled now for:  
March 25th and April 22nd

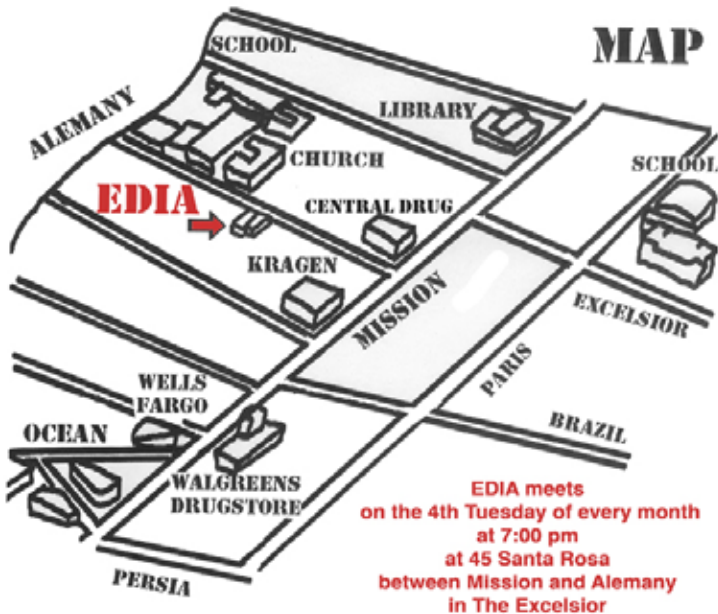
### EDIA Officers, Board Members and Trustees

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email: prezjack@jackiejack.com

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# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

**It is easy to join or renew your EDIA membership. Just fill out and clip this coupon; then enclose it with a check or money order for \$15.00 made out to EDIA**

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Excelsior District Improvement Association

P.O. Box 12005

San Francisco CA 94112-0005



# EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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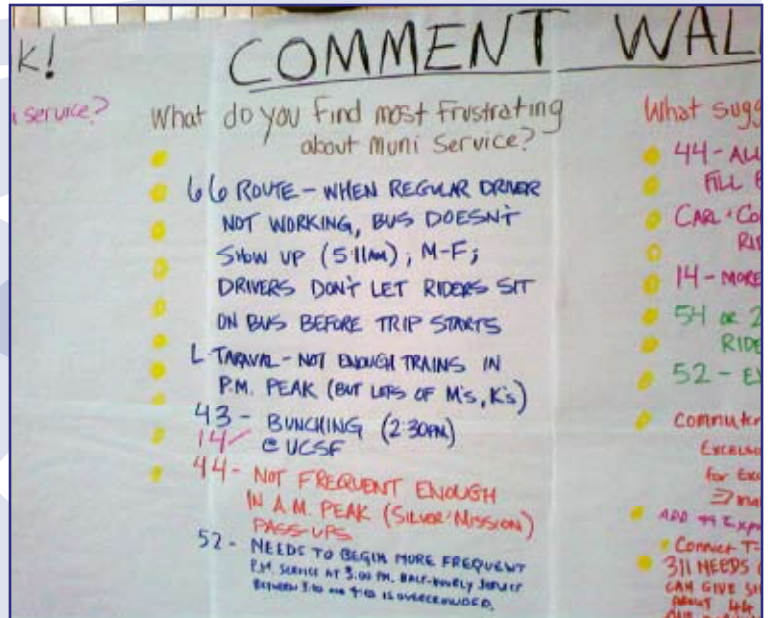
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A Comment Wall covered in transit suggestions from residents at the local TEP meeting — see article page 2

## Coming up at Our March 25th Meeting

Among the agenda items we are in the process of arranging for the next EDIA general meeting

scheduled for 7 p.m. at 45 Santa Rosa on March 25, 2008 are:

(1) a presentation by representatives of SAFE concerning creation of “neighborhood watch” programs. There has been a rash of tire puncturing in the Excelsior in recent months and S.F.P.D. has recommended this as one approach to consider.

(2) a representative of Assemblywoman Fiona Ma will discuss her new bill concerning graffiti.

(3) the new transit changes proposed for the Excelsior will be discussed

(4) update on latest developments on the Woolworth site.

The final agenda will be posted on our website: [excelsiorsf.org](http://excelsiorsf.org) It is generally posted one day prior to the date of the meeting.



EDIA

P.O. Box 12005  
San Francisco, CA 94112-0005

PLACE STAMP  
HERE