

# SUNNYDALE

NEWSLETTER | VOL. 2

Wallace has been a resident of Sunnydale his whole life. In order to qualify to work for Cahill on Parcel O, he recently completed an eight-week training class.

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**A LETTER  
FROM DOUG  
SHOEMAKER,  
PRESIDENT**

Welcome to the second issue of The Sunnydale Newsletter. So much is happening on the ground that we barely have room to share all the highlights in this issue. On behalf of our staff, residents, and partners, we thank you for making the redevelopment of Sunnydale a reality. We appreciate your support and couldn't do it without you.

The most tangible sign of progress is construction of the first Sunnydale replacement homes, which are halfway finished and scheduled to open in fall of 2019. Development of the first new homes at Sunnydale is being led by our partners, Related Companies of California. We will be starting the second phase of construction soon, which will include new infrastructure and ultimately concludes with 167 new affordable homes.

Construction has also brought new jobs to the neighborhood. To take full advantage of this opportunity, residents and staff are focused on work readiness and job placement in partnership with local organizations, city agencies, and Cahill Construction. Over a dozen residents have worked on this first building, and 130 Sunnydale residents are preparing for additional job training and placement.

Another key aspect of our work is making sure that long-standing residents are able to

move into the new homes. Our multilingual and multicultural staff are working in partnership with Bay Area Legal Aid and the YMCA to provide one-on-one counseling to households for eviction prevention, so they can retain their current apartments and qualify for relocation and later replacement housing.

We are working tirelessly with residents to prepare them to move into their new homes and renovated apartments within Sunnydale. Through a partnership with San Francisco's housing agencies, dozens of residents have already moved into new homes around the city, including 23 families that chose to move into Mercy Housing's recently completed Natalie Gubb Commons near the Salesforce Transbay Terminal.

Last but not least, with funding from our 2017 Gala and the Susan Wang Fund, we are able to support much-needed youth programs and leadership development activities. While this is some of the most important work we are doing, it is also notoriously difficult for us to fund from operations and public sources. In addition to summer field trips, this past summer we greatly expanded the Summer Youth Leadership Program to make it a year-round opportunity.

Much remains to be done in Sunnydale. But with your support, we are seeing unprecedented progress in all areas, from community building and youth empowerment to housing construction and job placement. Thank you for helping to make this possible.



# THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

An essential program at Sunnydale for the residents is the Young Leadership Program. This program just finished its second summer with about 35 students participating – ages 12 through 17.

These middle school and high school students met at least three times a week all summer for activities in the neighborhood and around town. One of the most exciting things that the group worked on last summer was planning out

the future community center at Sunnydale. They toured Lakeview Park, Glen Park, and the Boys & Girls Club in Fillmore. Architects and city planners met with them to plan the types of things they would like to see in the community center. They are especially interested in the teen portion of the community center – making sure it includes computers, a recording booth, and a safe place to hang out and do homework. These young people also envisioned a café where they could work. Creating

employment opportunities are a big priority for them as they look to the future.

With the support of our donors, this youth leadership program will now be run year-round. During the school year, the group will meet at least once weekly for workshops and outings and will add a theater component. They will continue to make plans for the community center and envisioning a brighter future for themselves and their families.

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# FIRST BUILDING GOING UP

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Construction on the first building of the new Sunnydale neighborhood is underway, and scheduled to be complete in the fall of 2019. As you enter the neighborhood on the north side, you will pass a lively construction site, Parcel Q, the first building in Sunnydale. Many people from the neighborhood walk down each day to watch the structure grow. There is palpable excitement on the site as the workers with orange hard hats are silhouetted against the sky, making new homes for Sunnydale.

The first building will have 55 homes that surround a shared community room and courtyard. The community room will have a teen room, which is a quiet place to do homework or meet with friends. The courtyard will have a barbeque, and play structure for the younger kids.



Sunnydale residents are designing the lobby with an artwork installation by artists from the neighborhood.

Residents of this new building will be chosen by lottery. All 775 families who live in Sunnydale were entered into the lottery, and in the spring of 2019, families will be chosen to move into a new home in Parcel Q. There will be three studios, 19 one-bedrooms, 19 two-bedrooms, and 14 three-bedroom homes. Seventy-five percent of these newly constructed homes will be for existing residents.



**DeAngelo** worked for 10 years at Cahill before starting this spring on the Parcel Q site. He was a resident at Sunnydale.



**Daisha**, who has worked on Parcel Q since the spring, has lived in Sunnydale for about a year.



**Antoine** has been a resident of Sunnydale for his whole life. He has worked as a construction worker for eight years, and working for Cahill on Parcel Q for the past five months.

# RESIDENTS WORKING ON REBUILD

Visitation Valley was once anchored by major employers like Schlage Lock. Job loss in the 1970s and 1980s left many residents with limited employment options, and these blue-collar jobs never returned. Multiple generations of families have grown up in a community in which unemployment is ten times higher than the national average, particularly for young black men and women.

When work began on the rebuilding of Sunnydale, residents and staff knew that construction work would provide a unique opportunity to bring jobs back to the neighborhood. Residents warned staff that these jobs often went to people outside the community. They pushed to make sure that this wouldn't happen again.

Mercy Housing, Related Companies, HOPE SF, and local nonprofits like the Neighborhood Access Point (NAP) began working to prepare residents for these possible job opportunities. Through

these efforts, 130 residents have engaged with job training and placement, and 38 residents have secured full-time employment. Fourteen of these hires, including three women, are in construction as laborers and carpenters at Parcel Q. Another 29 people have been able to find employment in other fields like office work and healthcare.

The work at Sunnydale is complex because young people are often working to overcome multiple barriers, such as lack of education or a criminal record. One young man had a gang injunction against him – a restraining order addressing his activities in the community – when he got connected to the job placement program. After being accepted into the program and going through the training, he now works full-time as a carpenter for \$27 per hour, and the gang injunction has been lifted. The community benefits from these opportunities are giving residents avenues to success and avoiding “system-involved” lifestyles.





# MOVING INTO NEW HOMES

Moving residents into their new homes is the most rewarding part of building affordable housing. At Sunnydale, the first set of residents to move are the 109 families whose homes are scheduled for demolition and reconstruction this fall to make room for new affordable apartments. Through a lottery process, 41 households will move into the new apartments on Parcel Q at the corner of Hahn and Visitacion.

In addition, since rebuilding Sunnydale will take many years, the City, along with Mercy Housing and Related Companies have begun to provide residents with the option to move into new mixed-income housing in other parts of San Francisco. This spring, 23 households moved from Sunnydale into their new homes at Natalie Gubb Commons. In addition to frequent visits from our Sunnydale team, onsite staff at the new building provide support to help families and kids adjust to their new lives in the Transbay Neighborhood. Another 25 families have chosen to take the opportunity to move into one of the two completed HOPE SF sites,



Hunters View and Alice Griffith, in the Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhood.

In the spring of 2019, demolition will begin on Block 6. This is the first stage in the master plan that involves replacing every home in Sunnydale. The new structures in Block 6 will be five stories tall with 167 homes surrounded by a landscaped pedestrian path and walkway. The community room will have a shared kitchen, and face a courtyard with barbeque pit and two play areas. There will be 21 one-bedrooms, 95 two-bedrooms, 40 three-bedrooms, and 11 four-bedroom homes. Construction will be finished in the spring of 2021. ►►



►►► Maria, Lamonte, and Jessica are three of the people who moved to Natalie Gubb Commons. They each have a different reason to choose a new home outside Sunnydale. Maria and her mother Filomena take walks twice a day, which was tricky during the short winter days living in Sunnydale, because they did not feel safe after dark. Maria heard about the opportunity to move during the Neighbor-Up Meeting and knew right away this was the place for her to be. She was fortunate to have a very good number in the lottery, and moved to Natalie Gubb Commons in June of 2018. “This is a safe place for us” says Maria.

For the past few years, Jessica lived with her daughters in Sunnydale, away from the support of her mother and sisters who live in the Fillmore district. She fell in with a group of people who encouraged her to engage in habits that were detrimental to her ability to be a good parent. Moving to Natalie Gubb Commons was a chance for her to break those connections, and live closer to her mother, sisters, and cousin. Jessica is also very excited to have the childcare center open in the building because access to

childcare means she can return to her work in the classroom as a teacher aide.



As a young person, Lamonte was often frightened by the violence in Sunnydale, where he lived with his mother. When he heard about the potential homes available in Natalie Gubb Commons, he was relieved to be offered a chance to move away from painful memories. He has been proud to show his new light-filled apartment with family when they come to visit.





# BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Every year, just before the start of school, parents, and students come together at the community center for a Back-to-School celebration. There are games, haircuts, back-to-school physicals, and booths for numerous community organizations. Eight hundred students leave with a backpack filled with school supplies, ready and eager for the first day of school. Parents were able to provide their families with the resources they need for a successful school year.



# PLANNING FOR THE HUB

Most of San Francisco's great neighborhoods are centered around a local park or a commercial street. People in the community gather together in these spaces to grab a cup of coffee, do some exercise, walk a dog, or hopefully share a laugh with a neighbor. Sunnydale was originally built without such a space, but that is about to change with the development of the Sunnydale HUB.

In September, over 300 residents and other Visitacion Valley neighbors joined staff from San Francisco Recreation & Parks, Mercy Housing, and Related Companies to help continue planning for the hub. The event gave residents a chance to share what they hope to see in the community center, gym, and community spaces being planned for the corner of Sunnydale and Hahn Avenues. They also learned about the plan to relocate and expand both the Boys & Girls Club and the Wu Yee early childhood education center to serve as anchors of the HUB.

Immersive, hands-on activities enticed everyone who attended to communicate their priorities and dreams for the new community center. Each completed activity earned a stamp in a passport that could be exchanged for tickets for the taco trucks and cotton candy vendor. This useful data about what the families want most to have in the neighborhood will be the basis of the plans for the community center.

This community center has the potential to radically change the lives of the children in this neighborhood. As the heart of this neighborhood, this space will give children a safe place to play and learn in a welcoming environment. Their parents will have a place to exercise, a childcare center, and gathering spaces to socialize with their neighbors.





# GROWING COMMUNITY

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For the past four years Urban Sprouts has been working with residents and staff to create and cultivate community gardens at Sunnydale. The gardens help provide residents with fresh, healthy food and as importantly help residents make connections to each other and build a sense of community.

Mercy Housing has been working with Urban Sprouts to maintain community gardens at Sunnydale for the past four years. Herman, who has been the manager of these gardens for the past two years, describes the ways that the gardens work to combat social isolation and engender a sense of community. He talks about the codes of reciprocity that many of the residents have. For example, a resident who gave him a mooncake in exchange for fresh tomatoes from the garden. These simple acts of kindness build relationships that make a neighborhood feel like home. The goal of these gardens is to build a healthier community where people come together, not just healthier eating.

Darrell is a Sunnydale resident who has been working in the gardens for two years. He completed training from Common Compost and now manages worm bins. This is actually much more involved than it sounds. Darrell explains that there are over 40,000 worms in the bin, which must be fed every other day with non-acidic fruits and vegetables. A couple of times a month, the compost is harvested and shared in the community. Darrell first became interested in community gardens when he worked in his school gardens in the first grade. He likes to harvest collard greens and mustard greens from the garden. His culinary specialty is pesto using the garlic and basil from the garden.



# CREATING SPACE FOR CONNECTIONS

Mercy Housing partners with local organizations for opportunities to meet with neighbors, forge relationships, and learn about resources in the community.

## NEIGHBOR-UP NIGHT

With support and coaching from staff of the National Institute on Mixed-Income Communities at Case Western Reserve, we have hosted seven monthly Neighbor-Up Nights so far this year, each attracting about 50 residents. More inclusive and strategic than our old community meetings, Neighbor-Up Nights give residents the chance to set the agenda, get to know one another, share their skills, and lead small group discussions. Ultimately, we intend to expand these meetings to include surrounding neighbors to enable residents to work on key issues like safety and schools.



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## GAME NIGHT

Every Wednesday, residents gather for Game Night in the community room to share a meal, play bingo, and chat with friends. Before the games begin, there is a community bulletin or announcement where residents learn about resources and opportunities available to them in the neighborhood. Many of the people who attend game night return on Thursday for Zumba class. These are activities to inspire confidence, build connections, and allow resident's access to and knowledge of resources available to them.



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# GET INVOLVED

## VOLUNTEER AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SUNNYDALE

Join Mercy Housing California's effort to transform the Sunnydale Community. Help beautify the neighborhood, plant community gardens, support kids in preparing for the new school year, and more.

Contact [kfrench@mercyhousing.org](mailto:kfrench@mercyhousing.org) or 916.330.3356

