OPNANews

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A Publication of the North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association

Summer 2023

401 BAKER STREET:

THE San Francisco Landmark by Leela Gill



In 1891, 401 Baker Street was constructed at a cost of \$15,000, which at the time was an extravagantly large sum of money. It was built by Daniel Roth, a prominent San Francisco businessman who commissioned architectural firm Townsend & Wyneken to design the picturesque, four-story Queen Anne style house with classic "witch's cap" turret, complete with finial on top

and a spire of carved acanthus leaves. Its white marble steps lead to an ornate front porch with composite triple Corinthian columns supporting a fretwork and medallionembellished canopy.

Welcome to this historic building, which is currently the home of Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center. More recently, NOPNA moved our community meetings to this space in 2023.

FROM THE BOARD

MEDITATING ON NOPNA HAPPENINGS





Martin Almaraz NOPNA President

On April 20, NOPNA hosted a community meeting at Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center for the first time. We focused the meeting on two topics: homelessness and safety. We had a stellar speaker line-up including District 2 Supervisor Catherine Stefani, MyOwnLockandKey.

org leader Alex Tourk, and Bay to Breakers representative Kyle Meyers.

After San Francisco's 2022 supervisorial redistricting, District 2 Supervisor **Stefani** became the representative for about half of NOPA's residents. She spoke about her office's efforts to clean up the streets around City Center and explained that limited San Francisco Police Department resources have made it difficult to help people experiencing homelessness. We've also heard this from District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston and from Emily Cohen, director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. NOPNA will continue to push for progress on these topics and will share updates from these departments.

Alex Tourk, former deputy chief of staff to Governor Gavin Newsomturned-homelessness solution seeker, offered the idea of "tiny homes" for the unhoused. If done well, this can be a low cost, safe, and more humane alternative to the current San Francisco Navigation Centers. Alex noted that tiny homes provide a sense of security and stability, having their own "lock and key." You can learn more by going to their website at myownlockandkey.org.

Rounding out our community meeting agenda, Kyle Meyers from Bay to Breakers discussed updates for this year's 12k race and reported that Bay to Breakers "has approximately 900 toilets for a 12,000 person race . . . which is probably more than anywhere else in the world." This helped ensure the 2023 race was a flushing success!

As we head into 2023, we want to thank City Real Estate at 629 Divisadero for its unwavering support in hosting our community meetings through 2021 and 2022. We're excited to host our remaining 2023 meetings at Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center and want to thank them for opening up their beautiful home and public speaking venue to our neighbors. We hope to see you at the next community meeting.





North of **Panhandle** Neighborhood Association

NOPNA News is published by the North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association for the residents, businesses, and friends of our neighborhood, which is bounded by Masonic Avenue and Turk, and Divisadero and Fell Streets.

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NOPNA is a non-profit organization of neighbors who care about the community, our city, and our world. Our mission is to establish neighborhood unity, maintain multi-ethnic, 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.

Your financial support allows NOPNA to cover the costs of our newsletters, community building events like our block party and holiday party, public art projects in the neighborhood, and other activities that enrich our dynamic neighborhood.

> Make a difference on our streets and become a member today!

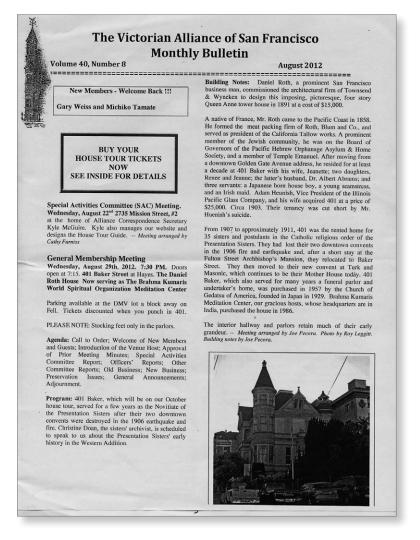
Contact NOPNA

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THE STORY OF A SAN FRANCISCO LANDMARK



401 Baker has a rich history in our neighborhood. After its historic origins, the house was sold for \$25,000 in 1903 to Adam Heuisch, vice president of the Illinois-Pacific Glass Company. Mr. Heuisch lived there with his wife and teenage daughter, ran a successful business, but tragically took his own life in 1908.

In 1910, a Christian faith-based organization called the Presentation Sisters rented the home. Their organization was founded in Ireland in 1775 and still promotes justice and human dignity to this day. They

used the building as an academy and convent, housing about 35 Irish students and nuns on-site.

In 1915, May Woodard purchased the house. She may have lived in the house for some time, and she later rented it to Ruth Harrison. Ms Harrison lived there starting in the 1920s, along with three generations of her family: her grandparents; parents; and her husband Carlos, an importer. Ruth purchased the building in 1947.

In 1957, the Church of Gedatsu of America purchased the building. The next change of ownership took place in 1986, when the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization purchased it. This organization currently owns and maintains the house.

Today, the building remains open to community members who want to participate in free meditation guidance and classes.

The North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association (NOPNA) is delighted to have the opportunity to host its neighborhood meetings in this iconic building, and we invite you to join us. NOPNA meetings are held every other month on the third Thursday. Remaining 2023 meetings will be on August 24 and October 26. Doors open at 7:00pm and meetings start promptly at 7:30pm.

Join us and get a peek inside this beautiful and historical building!

Acknowledgements and special thanks to: The Victorian Alliance of San Francisco, 2012, victorianalliance. org, which provided the basis of this story. In addition, we want to thank and recognize neighbors Micheal Helquist, historian and former President of NOPNA, and Native Daughters of the Golden West for their contributions to the original documentation of the story. Last, we want to especially thank Sister Sukanya, Sister Kyoko, and all of our friends at Brahma Kumaris, or opening up this beautiful home to our community for its neighborhood meetings.

BASA CANNABIS DISPENSARY KEEPS IT COMPASSIONATE By Steve Nuzzo

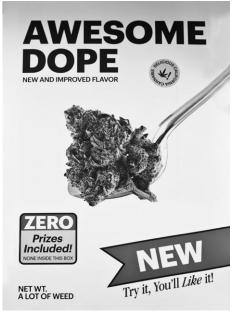
BASA is one of the NOPA neighborhood's cornerstone businesses and is now celebrating it's 20th year in business. Located on the corner of Grove and Divisadero, it's been owned and operated by Tariq Alazraie since 2003. Initially operated as a medical marijuana

dispensary, it transitioned to a recreational dispensary in 2016 after California legalized recreational marijuana use.

Even as the business has changed dramatically over the years, Tariq is determined that BASA continue to adhere to its founding principles, which are embedded in Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Act. This act helped make sure seriously ill Californians had affordable access to marijuana for medical purposes. To this day, BASA ensures their customers in need — some of the same customers they've served for over 20 years — are given free product. Some of these customers have AIDS, are cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, have severe arthritis, or are enduring chronic pain. They might have a fixed or low income. Right now, BASA provides 80 customers with 5 ounces of free cannabis each month to help them manage their health issues.

BASA Managers (left to right) Nas Jackson, Kittrick Mann, Raunak Rishav, and owner Tariq Alazraie.









According to Tariq, the BASA employee family — now over 30 strong — feels proud to be part of a pioneering industry integral to so many lives. They provide customers with cannabis products used for sleep and relaxation aid, stress and pain relief, or stimulation and heightened awareness. The notion

of a family of employees can be construed as a cliché, but Tariq and Manager Kittrick Mann consistently strive to make it a reality at BASA, and they seem to be successful. Staff turnover at BASA is low and enthusiasm is high.

Customer engagement is a term used frequently at BASA, implying

a deeper relationship beyond the product itself. It starts with the bud tender who functions as a "professor of pot," dispensing advice and sharing their knowledge so they can provide suggestions tailored to each individual. One only needs to walk into the shop to feel the respect and attention paid to each customer.

Despite this, operating BASA has not been easy, Tariq shared. How the business is managed and organized has changed dramatically over the years. Before legalization, growers supplied cannabis to BASA directly. Today, beyond the stringent state regulations, all the product comes branded and packaged, tracked, and labeled — much like grapes in the wine industry. The metrics are similar: pot seeds are identified, tracked, and labeled throughout the entire process, and, of course, taxed heavily.

In the end, BASA remains as it's always been: a righteous neighborhood establishment where everyone involved works hard to sustain a culture of engagement and service. Their staff involved spreads joy and knowledge, letting it gently seep into each customer that walks through the door — just as the pungent scent of cannabis floats out on the air surrounding this sweet corner of NOPA.



Steve has lived in NOPA for 17 years. When not traveling and making photos or substitute teaching, he can be found bike riding around SF and Marin.

A WALK THROUGH THE HISTORY OF GOLDEN GATE AVENUE By Apoort Narang



"Yes, young lady, we have the apartment for you," Myrtis Mixon, 87, fondly recalls her previous landlord Giles Smith saying to her when she and her husband Randall Imel initially rented their unit on Golden Gate Avenue in 1991. They eventually bought the house in 1996 from Giles, who they believe was the first African American homeowner to move to Golden Gate Avenue after World War II.

I recently spoke with Myrtis, who walked me through the ways this special neighborhood has evolved over the last 32 years, sharing her strong sense of the community that has persisted here throughout its history.

Myrtis and Randall live on what is now the Golden Gate Slow Street. This street has changed over the years — it went from being an Italian neighborhood, to being a predominantly African American neighborhood after World War II. It also went from being part of the Western Addition, to being called "Lower Anza Vista," to now being a part of present-day NOPA.

When I spoke to Myrtis and Randall, they recalled how the Italian woman who sold her house to war veteran Giles had just signed a petition to keep Black people out of the neighborhood. But she couldn't refuse homeownership to

Giles, and told him, "You're the reason we have our freedom, and you deserve to own a home anywhere you want."

After Randall and Myrtis bought the house from Giles, they loved how neighbors on Golden Gate Avenue were always organizing events with a strong sense of community. They also recall attending Golden Gate Neighborhood Association's monthly meetings to discuss public safety issues before this group merged into NOPNA.

Myrtis said their meetings were held in the basement of neighbor Lella Brown's house on Golden Gate Avenue at Lyon Street. Lella was known as the "mother of the neighborhood" because she raised

so many kids in her childcare center and organized a large block party every Fourth of July. For that occasion, each year until about 15 years ago, Golden Gate Avenue was lined with American flags and there was a potluck barbecue. Randall and a few neighbors try to keep some of that tradition alive by flying flags every Fourth of July. Through the last few years of the pandemic, they brought out music, snacks, and chairs on the Golden Gate Slow Street every Friday at 6 pm.

Myrtis and Randall originally moved to San Francisco to escape the icy New York winters, so they love how walkable the neighborhood has always been. They've always been an outgoing couple, walking around to bars and restaurants, including to what used to be a string of shops at what's now the current Lucky location. Every day for over 15 years, Myrtis walked to her job as an English professor at University of San Francisco. She still climbs up to the campus in Lone Mountain whenever she can.

Apoorv is on the board of NOPNA, and has been renting the lower apartment in Randall and Myrtis's house for over two years. He can be found gardening with Myrtis on summer weekends in a guest to grow tomatoes in their foggy garden.

by Jason Cauthen

We've all done it: a distracted moment, a strong breeze, and a loose grip, and the next thing you know, your Snickers wrapper, or Lucky's receipt, or biodegradable packaging material is halfway down the block. Maybe you once flicked a cigarette butt into a gutter or dropped something without knowing it. We've all contributed our share of litter to the world.

Refuse/Refuse provides us all with the opportunity to take things in the other direction. This group of volunteers meets in different neighborhoods across San Francisco to reduce the amount of trash in our community and environment. I joined

a cleanup event on a recent Sunday outside The Mill on Divisadero, where organizers handed out trashpickers to volunteers of all ages and descriptions. Volunteers then formed small teams that crisscrossed the neighborhood on planned routes, picking up litter and refuse all along the way.

You may have seen them, particularly if you're up and around early on weekend mornings. You'll find the pickers carrying distinctive orange bags as they patrol the sidewalks, the planters, and the medians, picking them clean as they go. With each piece of trash a volunteer retrieves, they remove a

hazard for our wildlife, a potential blocker of our storm drains, and certainly an eyesore for anyone passing by.

If you're interested in joining this community-affirming band in what is a surprisingly gratifying hobby, come to a local organized cleanup that meets at The Mill at 736 Divisadero, or at Manitas at 2078 Hayes. Refuse/ Refuse will supply the bags and pickers; all you need to bring is sunscreen, walking shoes, and





an eye for making our neighborhood more clean and beautiful. To check the latest schedule, go to https://refuserefusesf.org/ or click the QR code below.



Jason is a San Francisco native who has lived in NOPA for the past decade with his wife and two boys. He can be found throwing a football with his kid on Lyon Slow Street.



VISION ZERO: THE JOY OF RAISED CROSSWALKS By Ben Ewing



feels a little bit easier and safer. That's not an accident (no pun intended), it's because of a traffic calming tool called a "raised crosswalk." This nifty street design effectively combines a speed bump and a crosswalk into something that slows traffic and

makes the intersection safer for all.

If you're ever walking around Lower Haight, you might notice a couple of blocks where crossing the street

Raised crosswalks keep the pedestrian crossing section of the road at the same level as the sidewalk. This extra height shifts the paradigm of the intersection, prioritizing safety and ease for pedestrians. Raised crosswalks encourage drivers to slow down, make it easier for drivers to see pedestrians, and make for a

> more enjoyable walking experience by removing the need to dip in and out of the street. This smoother walk is especially beneficial for those who might have trouble walking around, including seniors, people with strollers, and small children.

These raised crosswalks have been installed along the Wiggle in Lower Haight, on John F. Kennedy (JFK) Drive in Golden Gate Park, and on John Muir Boulevard near Lake Merced to great

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effect. When they were added on JFK Drive (back when there were cars on the whole street), the rate of drivers yielding to pedestrians increased by 21%. Over on John Muir Boulevard, the newly installed raised crosswalks were shown to have lowered "85th percentile vehicle speeds" – what the Department of Transportation refers to as "the speed at or below which 85 percent of the drivers travel on a road segment" – from 43 to 29 mph, lowering it by 14 mph.

More recently, raised crosswalks were added to our neighborhood on the Golden Gate Avenue Slow Street at Baker and at Broderick. Unfortunately, the SFMTA only raised them 3.75", about half the height of those found on the Wiggle. As you might imagine, the lower height provides fewer safety benefits. This suboptimal design is something that the NOPNA Vision Zero Committee is in contact with SFMTA about and is advocating to improve.

Other cities – like Cambridge, MA; Jersey City, NJ; and Amsterdam, NL – have taken the concept further, raising entire intersections. In Jersey City, a city of over 280,000 residents, widespread use of tools like these led to zero traffic fatalities on city streets in 2022. In Amsterdam, a city renowned for its pedestrian friendly infrastructure, you'd be hard pressed to not encounter a raised intersection on a walk.

Slowly but surely, San Francisco has started to implement raised crosswalks, creating safer streets for all. Hopefully, this is just the start and we'll begin to see raised crosswalks and similar measures installed across our city, helping to create the safer, more enjoyable communities that we want to live in.



Ben has lived in San Francisco for five years, with the past two in NOPA. He loves to bike, walk, and take in everything the city has to offer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 1 — Divisadero Art Walk

July 9 — Refuse/Refuse NOPA Clean Up

August 13 — Refuse/Refuse NOPA Clean Up

August 17 — NOPNA General Meeting

September 10 — Refuse/Refuse Neighborhood Clean Up

September 24 — Sunday Streets

October 8 — Refuse/Refuse Neighborhood Clean Up

October 15 — Phoenix Day

October 19 — NOPNA General Meeting

October 29 — Alamo Scare

October 31 — NOPA Halloween Block Party

November 12 — Refuse/Refuse Neighborhood Clean Up

November 16 — NOPNA General Meeting

December 7 — Holiday Party, 6-8 pm, Club Waziema, 543 Divisadero

December 10 — Refuse/Refuse Neighborhood Clean Up

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, and get details and updates by signing up for emails at www.nopna.org.

Recurring Events:

SFPD Community Meeting —
4th Thursday of Every Month, RSVP
to community@sfsafe.org

Farmer's Market — DMV Parking Lot, Broderick@Fell, Sundays, 10 am–2pm

Email us to get involved: board@nopna.org



North of Panhandle Neighborhood Association

NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT: AN ENCLOSED DOG PARK IN THE PANHANDLE

Bv Caitlin Stanton

On September 27, 2022, my soul dog Cody was struck and killed by a driver while playing off-leash at the Panhandle. I had adopted him the previous January as a rescue from Mexico. He was sweet and curious — yet a little nervous, so we were taking time to grow in confidence as we explored the world together. We were having a walk and play session, similar to hundreds of times before both alone and with other dogs, but this time Cody got distracted and ran into the street. It was by-and-large the saddest day of my life and I'll never stop missing my lil' bubba.

For NOPA residents, the closest fenced-in dog park is in Corona Heights, about a mile away and up a large hill. The next closest fenced-in

dog park is three miles away at the end of Golden Gate Park. Alamo Square, Duboce Park, and Buena Vista Park all have their own off-leash dog play areas, but each are near traffic (cars and Muni) and are bounded by their own combination of nature and streets. Establishing a fenced-in dog park in the Panhandle (specifically on the western side) would not only be a resource for dogs to run around and play, it would also be an opportunity to

increase safety for pet parents and all Panhandle users. That's the current neighborhood project I'm embarking on (pun intended).

Green spaces in San Francisco are under the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (SFRPD), meaning that any development of those spaces must be approved by SFRPD. They have a straightforward process for establishing a dog play area, including the followina:

- Gather broad community support, including letters from district supervisor, community and park leaders, and community/neighborhood associations groups
- Hold at least two community



meetings for feedback and discussion about the proposal

• Develop and get approval for the project proposal from various city departments

I've spent the past several months gathering over 300 petition signatures to indicate interest in discussing the project as a community resource.



Petitioning is a concrete way of illustrating to SFRPD that there's support for community forums on the dog park proposal, which would get the ball rolling on (hopefully) breaking ground on a fenced-in play area. Proposed neighborhood changes require notification and acceptance of those who live nearby and would be most affected.

As a fellow NOPA resident, I ask that if you have opinions on establishing an enclosed dog park in the Panhandle, visit codysdogpark. com to submit your feedback and sign the petition. If you want to volunteer (particularly for gathering signatures and letters of support), email codysdogpark@gmail.com. At the end of the day, I want to provide a much-needed resource for the dogs of this neighborhood (including my own) while honoring the memory of my soul dog Cody.

Caitlin is a NOPNA board member, Jeepers's hooman, and Cody's forever dog mom.





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VANGUARD PROPERTIES





Stunning new listing!

Here we go again! For the 8th time spanning two decades, we get the pleasure of showcasing the vibrancy of living in an exquisite Queen Anne Victorian on NOPA's treasured Broderick Row! Wonderful neighbors, dynamic proximity to bustling Divisadero, and fabulously designed large-scale historical properties make this a very special place to call home. Meticulously redesigned, 705 Broderick is remodeled throughout with a designer's touch! The kitchen is noteworthy having been published in a designers mag, and the bathrooms are simply top-notch.

BroderickRow.com

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