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**SAVE THE DATE!**  
Date: December 6  
Annual Holiday Party  
Stay Tuned for Details!

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**NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS COUNCIL #40**  
Revitalizing Communities, Park by Park  
A Project of Urban Resource Systems  
451 Hayes Street, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102

*Join The Neighborhood Parks Council  
in celebration of our 10 Year Anniversary*

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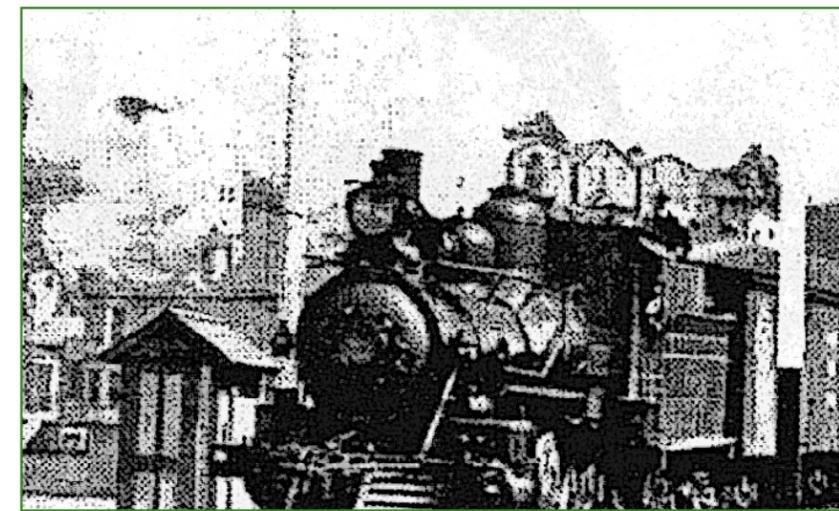
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**Juri Commons**

— Jeanne Alexander

*Juri Commons was originally a stretch of railroad track of the SF & SJ Railroad. From 1864-1906, the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad was one of California's first inter-city rail links. A \$2.50 ticket for a trip between the two cities brought passengers through the Mission District. When San Francisco magnates Mark Hopkins, Huntington Hartford, Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford bought out the SF & SJ, it marked the beginning of the Southern Pacific Railroad. After the 1906 earthquake, new tracks were built along the Bayshore replacing the Mission route and its tracks were pulled up and hauled away.*



*Under the tracks of this San Francisco-San Jose freight train lay the land that became Juri Commons. Photo courtesy of Toby Levine*

Fast forward to the 1970's when the Mission Planning Council, the Mission Housing Development Corporation (MHDC) and the Open Space Committee were working together to identify possible sites for neighborhood parks. "It was a long gestation period," says Toby Levine, unofficial neighborhood historian who lives across the street from Juri Commons. The MHDC in its 1974 report noted, "a park would serve that section of the Mission which has no park at all." Securing funding for open space acquisition was a challenge, however, even with the support of Cesar Chavez who led a march to promote the open space ballot measure with the banner "SI on C." Despite the nifty slogan, it failed. Two years later its replacement, Proposition J, passed and the old train yard became a park.

The Park' program requires 30 Commoners to commit one day a month to perform cleanup/safety patrol work. NPC's Park Scan website is used to report damage and/or vandalism.

The Commoners hope for some park design changes in the future. "As stewards of the park, neighbors volunteer in the maintenance programs and get acquainted, working together in the only yard most of us in the neighborhood will ever know," says Laura Glatstein, a Core Commoner, adding, "we're looking forward in new directions."

*Support the upcoming renovation of Juri Commons - contact Laura Glatstein at 415-517-0045*

Juri Commons, 120' long and 25' wide, opened early in 1986 as a pleasant green mini park containing a few benches and a compact children's playground. Renovations in the 90's saw the installation of the irrigation system, replacement of playground sand with resilient poured-in-place surfacing, and a bulletin board. Today a visitor finds flowering trees hanging over a redwood fence, bright flowers, fresh green grass and a stunning mural: Tirso Gonzales's vibrantly colored, sardonic view of dot com boom and bust in the Mission - it marks an era embedded in the city's history.

To move their vision ahead, NPC helped the neighbors secure design assistance from University of San Francisco and U.C. Berkeley. The student drawings were prodisplayed at the 'ART in the Park' fall festival at the Commons. Its 'Live

Art' block party in October served as a park pinata -- spilling out live musicians playing, children drawing on the pavement with chalk, and sculptors carving pumpkins. The Juri Commons train is moving full speed ahead.

Juri Commoners, 50 strong, have become ardent stewards of their park. Monthly work days, following a specific detailed Workday Checklist, have transformed the park. A 'Walk in

Established: 1974  
Location: between Guerrero and San Jose, 25th & 26th  
Bus: #27 Valencia  
Contact: Laura Glatstein at 415-517-0045

## Victoria Manalo Draves Park Opens SoMa

At the October 27th opening, children climbed a teepee-style jungle gym and took turns on the slide. A smaller playground for pre-schoolers contains a swing set and a pint-sized slide. **Supervisor Chris Daly** warmed up the new basketball court with a group of neighborhood kids.

The two acre park will serve 80 families in the SoMa neighborhood. This community has been historically underserved for green space. Annie Sexton, an after school manager in the community said, "It is a dream come true to have this park in the community. I hope that the community comes together to protect kids in the park."

About a year ago, a group of concerned citizens reached out to NPC for assistance in starting a friends of park group. NPC hosted the first Friends of Victoria Manalo Draves Park group meeting and facilitated meetings with the Recreation and Parks Department.

The park is named for Victoria Manalo Draves, the first Filipina to compete in the Olympic games. In 1948, she won gold medals in both the springboard and platform diving events. She has been an important role-model and in the Asian American community.

The community at every age level is excited by the park. A parent stopped to sign up as a volunteer and said, "I'm happy to finally see a park in the neighborhood for my two kids." An older man who has lived in San Francisco for over 30 years gave us his perspective, "I remember when this park was all bungalows. You could see them rotting away before your eyes. Now, they have this great park."

For more information about the Victoria Manalo Draves park, please contact Colleen Flynn at 415-621-3260.

## NPC Celebrates 10 Years

We're proudly celebrating ten years of advocacy in action for San Francisco's parks. Many thanks to the NPC staff, park volunteers and board of directors! We count on your support to continue our work.

Make parks a priority with your money and your time. Here's how:

- Volunteer in your favorite park: Contact Chloe Good 621-3260 ext. 116
- Be a Sustainer: monthly debit to your credit card
- Receive benefits as a Community Sponsor at \$5,000
- Join the Legacy Circle; Pledge \$10,000 over 10 years.

Your tax deductible gift directly supports stewardship in our parks. Donate online at [www.sfnpc.org](http://www.sfnpc.org) or call Leni deLeon at 621-3250, ext 114.

### Art in the Park



Laura Weil, an active member of the Friends of Victoria Manalo Draves Park, has partnered with Black Rock Arts Foundation to bring **Stan, Submerging Man** into the new park. The sculpture designed by Finely Fryer is a 18-foot-tall sculpture of a bell diver (covered with 45 rpm vintage records). The Recreation and Parks Department when building the platform for Stan graciously included an electrical outlet so that Stan can be fully illuminated from dark until midnight. The Black Rock Arts Foundation still needs your help installing Stan. Please visit, [www.donatetoblackrockarts.org](http://www.donatetoblackrockarts.org) to donate.

Photo courtesy of Finely Fryer, 1999

## Parks in the News

### LINDEN ALLEY GREEN SPACE

The mission of the Neighborhood Parks Council has always been, "revitalizing communities, park by park." **Architect David Winslow** is taking this one step further and revitalizing communities, alley by alley. Like parks, alleys have fallen into disrepair and misuse. Winslow hopes that by revitalizing Linden Alley it will encourage community and discourage crime. The alley will become more of a pedestrian walkway with a narrow space for cars.

### VOLUNTEER WITH THE RPD

After years of non-resolution, RPD Management and the Commission approved a Volunteer Policy park advocates find very exciting! With help from NPC, the Department recognized that to make everyone's efforts more productive, staff should develop work plans for each park, detailing projects that volunteers can work on. In addition, volunteers may also help envision and implement future landscape improvement projects, as well as perform agreed tasks that gardeners do not have time for.

### PATRICIA'S GREEN HALLOWEEN

Neighborhood kids in the Hayes Valley and surrounding areas were treated to a special Halloween this year. For the second year in a row, the Neighborhood Parks Council and the Hayes Valley Community Partners sponsored a safe Halloween event. Activities included a community art project lead by **Paint the Town**, a traveling art collective who lead kids and parents in creating a large paper mural with pen and watercolor. There was also games, facepainting, a pinata, candy and healthy treats for the kids. Stay tuned for more special events like these.

## Neighborhood Parks Council - A Ten-Year Assessment

— Isabel Wade, Executive Director

When the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) was launched 10 years ago, we didn't ask whether it was likely or even possible to create an excellent park system — we just jumped in. Our initial goals were to mobilize park volunteers to help, stem the decrease of park funding and promote professional management of the park system.

We think it is instructive to take a look back and examine the results of this decade-long effort. In taking a long-term, structural view of the changes needed to create a great park system, the NPC coalition has produced some essential changes.

- **Funding:** NPC spearheaded the following measures to bring both capital and operating funds to the Recreation and Park Department, and to encourage citizen initiative and matching funds:
  - 1) **Proposition A (2000):** \$110 million bond for improvements in neighborhood parks (the first park bond in 50 years)
  - 2) **Proposition C (2000):** renewal of the Open Space Fund for 30 years, providing about \$27 million annually for park operations
  - 3) **Community Challenge Fund (2006):** NPC urged the Mayor's Office to create this fund that provides up to \$100,000 for neighborhood beautification projects

• **Plans:** The park system had no guiding plans in 1996. A community task force organized by NPC and SPUR prepared a Parks Plan in 1998, still used by the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) in its planning efforts. Proposition C (2000) required RPD to prepare strategic, operational and capital plans for the first time in its 50-year history. NPC secured funding to hire Leon Younger & Pros to conduct the strategic planning effort.

• **Standards:** Proposition C (2003), co-sponsored by NPC, required that written maintenance standards be created for parks. Each park receives a bi-annual report card based on these standards. Report cards and the Controller's annual audit of RPD's are posted on their website.

• **Open Space Equity:** NPC prepared a comprehensive analysis of open space gaps, including playgrounds, in our groundbreaking study Green Envy (2003). Plans to fill the gaps will be developed by an Open Space Task Force Mayor Gavin Newsom will launch in 2007.

• **BlueGreenway Trail:** Imagine a 13-mile trail for walking and biking, for appreciation of nature, to showcase a rotating exhibit of art, and as a ribbon of activity and green space along a working waterfront. This southern portion of San Francisco's Bay Trail is the vision of a growing community and civic coalition spearheaded by NPC with the backing of Mayor Newsom, Supervisor Maxwell and Assemblyman Mark Leno.



• **Playground Safety:** NPC conducted a playground survey in 2006 that found 27 playgrounds rated D and F grades. We are working with RPD to bring all playgrounds to at least a C by February 2007.

• **Stewardship:** Even with adequate funding for maintenance, a dream far from realized, all studies indicate that public spaces fare best when residents have a sense of ownership of them.
 

- 1) **NPC Coalition:** From 8 park groups at the inaugural meeting to more than 120 groups, we're still growing!
- 2) **ParkScan:** The ParkScan website ([www.ParkScan.org](http://www.ParkScan.org)) provides a tracking number for each observer that reports a condition of concern in a park.

2006: 145 parks reporting.

NPC is excited about our progress, helping to transform the park management system and building civic commitment to parks. We continue to believe that improving parks is more than a funding problem, but we do need to invest in these vital assets to realize the full potential of parks to our communities, to our environment and to our economy.

Please contact us about getting involved in our next decade of work. Help create a park system that will be a lasting legacy for future generations. Visit our website at [www.sfnpc.org](http://www.sfnpc.org) or call us at 415-621-3260.