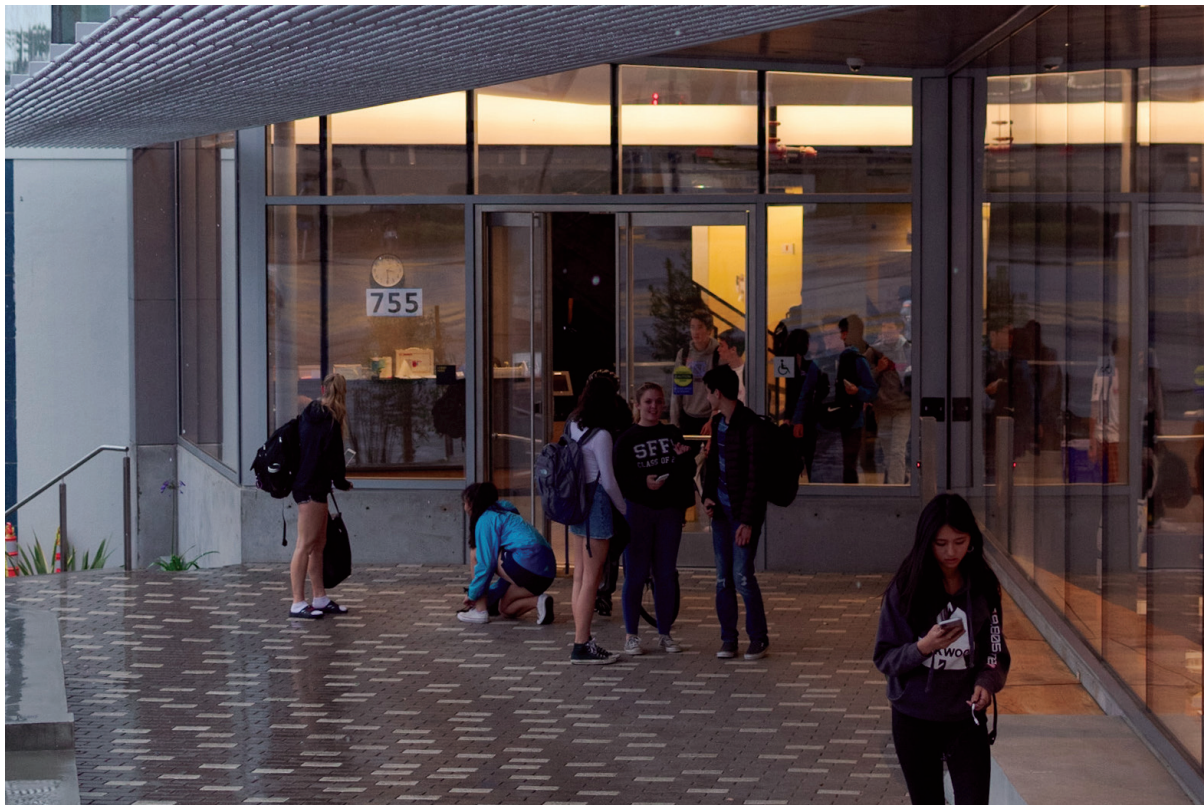


INGLESIDE-EXCELSIOR LIGHT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. | WWW.IELIGHTSF.COM | FREE

DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019

Lick-Wilmerding High Renewed



CLIFF FERNANDES/INGLESIDE-EXCELSIOR LIGHT

Lick-Wilmerding High School students exit the renovated front entrance on a rainy afternoon at the end of the school day.

Prestigious School's \$46 Million Makeover Nears Completion

By DAVID MAMARIL HOROWITZ
CONTRIBUTOR

The remodeling and rebuilding of Lick-Wilmerding High School nears completion following the replacement of its two-story classroom and administrative wing on Ocean Avenue in Ingleside.

Students on Oct. 7 moved into the new three-story building, which brings the entrance of the prestigious private high school onto Ocean Avenue and Howth Street, and makes it

more accessible for people with disabilities. With a facade along Ocean Avenue that features large windowpanes, the new building holds 19 classrooms, a new science lab, a spacious dance studio, admissions, faculty offices and more.

The campus plan recommended the makeover after finding that the school faced seismic challenges. Moreover, the previous building, constructed in 1956, was made for 250 students; its capacity of 490 students had already

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

URBAN PLANNING

Neighborhood Strategy Draft Report Released

By WILL CARRUTHERS
CONTRIBUTOR

After a year and a half of public outreach and study, city planners unveiled a set of goals for the future of several District 11 neighborhoods.

On Nov. 3, the Planning Department released a draft of the Excelsior-Outer Mission Neighborhood Strategy online, before gathering a final round of public comments at a Nov. 29 community meeting.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

INTERVIEW

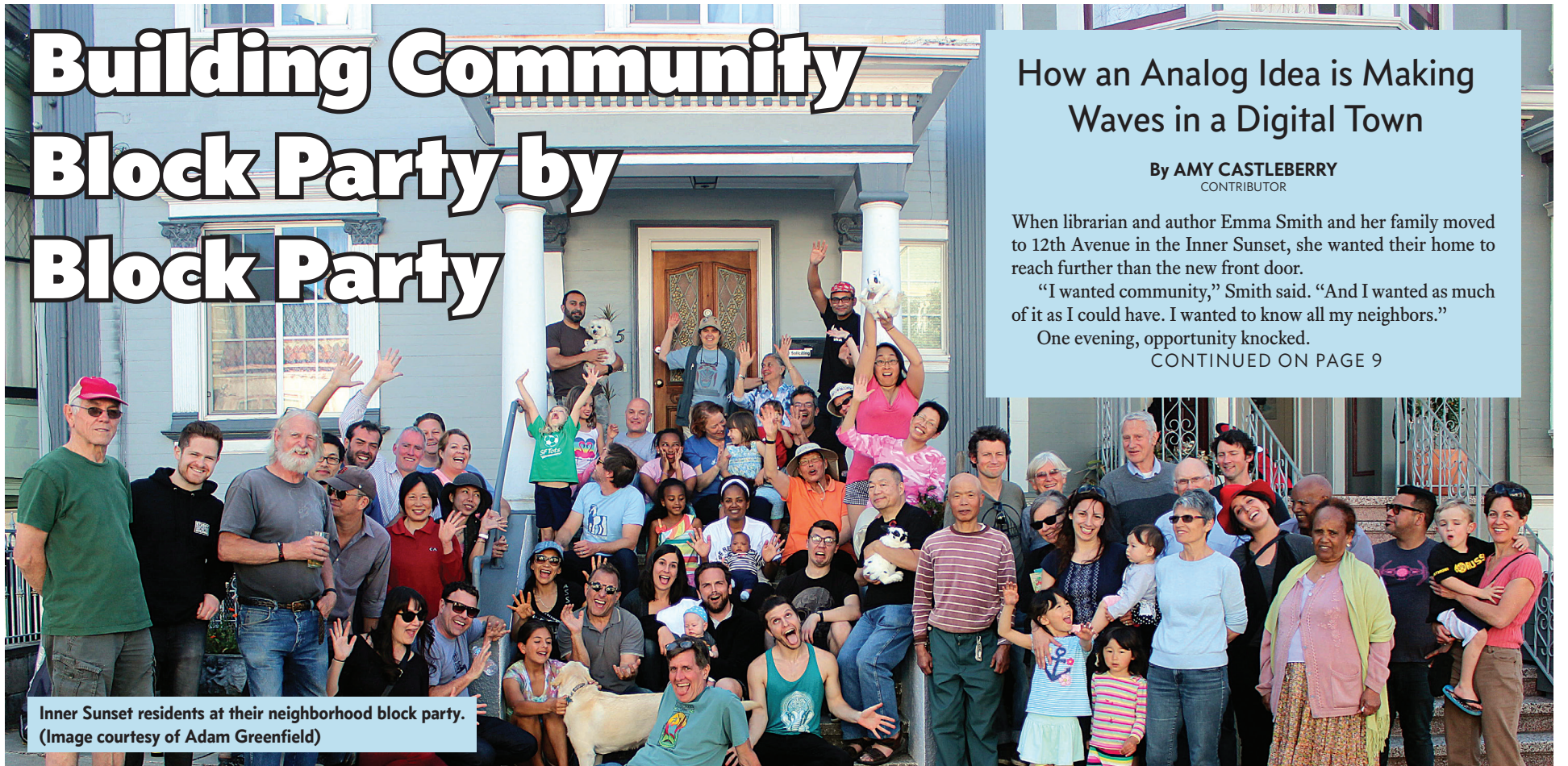
Chris Corgas: The Community Benefit District Whisperer

By ALEXANDER MULLANEY
PUBLISHER and EDITOR

In 2015, City Hall's Office of Economic and Workforce Development hired Excelsior native Chris Corgas to work with the Invent In Neighborhood team overseeing the Community Benefit District program. Since then, he has ushered in many new CBDs, nonprofit organizations that do maintenance and improvement work on commercial corridors, and helped existing CBDs grow.

Question: What's your background and what brought you to
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Building Community Block Party by Block Party



Inner Sunset residents at their neighborhood block party. (Image courtesy of Adam Greenfield)

How an Analog Idea is Making Waves in a Digital Town

By AMY CASTLEBERRY
CONTRIBUTOR

When librarian and author Emma Smith and her family moved to 12th Avenue in the Inner Sunset, she wanted their home to reach further than the new front door.

"I wanted community," Smith said. "And I wanted as much of it as I could have. I wanted to know all my neighbors."

One evening, opportunity knocked.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CITY COLLEGE
Preparation for a facilities bond begins
PAGE 2

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT
Design with Seniors Instead of for Them
PAGE 4

ILLUSTRATED INGLESIDE
A visual survey of the neighborhood's cartouches
PAGE 11

Your Guide to What's New in The City.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
www.thissanfrancisco.com

THIS SAN FRANCISCO





An afternoon full of community spirit on Emma Smith's block of 12th Avenue in the Inner Sunset. Photograph courtesy of Adam Greenfield.

Neighbors Unlocking Block Parties to Build Stronger Communities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Smith's neighbor, Adam Greenfield, stood on her doorstep, a clipboard and flyers in hand, and asked if she was interested in starting a block party.

"Yes! Come on in!" Smith said.

Greenfield connected Smith to other like-minded neighbors on her street. They began holding meetings and making plans. Their block party has been held consecutively for five years and the street feels like home from one end of the block to the other.

The 12th Avenue neighbors are at the forefront of a growing trend in San Francisco where more and more residents are transforming average city blocks into vibrant gathering spaces.

From the Richmond to Potrero Hill, residents are dusting off barbecues and blowing up bouncy houses to get together in the street.

Between January and November, over 110 permits were filed for block parties in San Francisco. Some events are extravagant: one street in the Bayview has food trucks, dancers and a Navy brass band. Others are simple: Lisbon Street in the Excelsior has a potluck on folding tables.

The old-fashioned neighborhood block party, it turns out, increases community well-being and even helps neighbors become better prepared in the event of a natural disaster or emergency.

Connected Neighbors

Organizing the block party was the opportunity neighbors needed to get to know one another.

"They didn't know the people next door to them who had been living there for years and years," Smith said.

Between planning and attending the event, most of the block's 80 households got engaged, and a community formed.

Now they have a Google Group to communicate and things have become so friendly that, in addition to the block party, they have casual monthly get-togethers dubbed "Twelfth on Twelfth," where the adults sip wine while the kids shoot Nerf guns and ride scooters.

All this neighborly bonding started with a group of deceptively simple things: folding tables with a pot luck lunch, a water balloon toss and a Halloween pet-costume parade.

"[The street is] the ultimate leveling mechanism," Greenfield said. "Public space is the only place anywhere where everyone is equal. In good public space, every kind of person is present."

Seniors and toddlers, old-school natives and newcomers, plumbers and professors; people who might not otherwise have a meal together end up mingling.

"I think I have the keys to about at least a dozen [houses] on the block," Smith said. "If one person isn't home they'll ask another neighbor to pick up their package. If someone has to go to an early work meeting they might drop their kid at our house a half an hour early and we'll just walk the kid to school. I've had people text me to ask if I can go into their garage because someone is coming by to get a baseball uniform for their kid's team."

Community Wellbeing

Beyond that cozy, friendly feeling, there's evidence that neighbors who know each other are better equipped to weather a literal

storm.

Professor Daniel Aldrich of Northwestern University has studied how strong social bonds can make communities more resilient to natural disasters, particularly in Japan.

"The best drivers of recovery and survival in [Japan] didn't come from demographics, didn't come from spending. It came from trust and cohesion," Aldrich said at Neighborhood Empowerment Network's Community Resiliency Summit earlier this year.

The folks next door might not just be the people who bring in your trash bins when you're out of town. In an emergency, they might also be what Aldrich calls your "zero responders," the individuals who will be on site before any first responder could be.

"How do we find someone to help us if we don't know anyone nearby?" Aldrich said. "If the daycare is closed, who'll be watching my kids? If there's no gasoline nearby, how do I get to work? If you haven't built those [relationships] before the disaster, it's much harder afterwards to draw on them."

Community Resilience

The 1700 block of Quesada Avenue epitomizes neighborly spirit.

Residents there have been building deep relationships for years. (Their slogan is "This is what community looks like.") But until three years ago, they didn't have an annual block party.

In 2016, neighbors started participating in NeighborFest, a block party program administered by NEN, one of two city-funded programs that offer support to block party hosts. It aims to bolster a neighborhood's ability to survive and recover from a natural disaster by creating community.

On Quesada Avenue, disaster readiness training comes wrapped in a blow-the-doors-off fiesta featuring a barbecue, an ice cream truck, live music, face painting, a photo booth and even an open mike. Among the festivities, there's also a focus on readying neighbors to help each other and themselves in the event of an emergency.

It might seem like an odd marriage, but the block party has proven to be the perfect vehicle for preparing people to act together when trouble strikes.

Wei Ming Dariotis and her husband Hussain Abdulhaqq have been involved in planning the block party since the beginning.

Standing in front of their home proudly sporting matching "Quesada NeighborFest" t-shirts, they put out a registration table where neighbors pick up meal tickets for the barbecue lunch.

"In exchange for the meal ticket, they have to give us information about who's in their house, and what they can do to help in an emergency," Dariotis said.

The list of residents is meant to function as a resource, and roster. Block captains are prepared to go down the list and mark people off as safe, ensuring that all occupants of each house are accounted for.

Building familiarity with one another before a crisis is important.

"Imagine it's 4 o'clock in the morning and the electricity's out, and people are scared because it's dark, and there's been an earth-

quake," Dariotis said. "And you have someone pounding on your door and they're just shouting at you. Now, imagine that they're shouting your name."

The difference between a trusted voice and a strange one is dramatic. That is one reason behind their collective goal to know the name of everybody on their block so that they can help them in case of an emergency.

Via a silent auction and other fundraising activities on the day of the party, the residents collected enough funds to purchase a generator, which is currently stored in a neighbor's garage. If an earthquake cuts off their electricity, they will have a shared power source. They hope to purchase a second generator in the next year or two.

With the help of NEN staff, they've also created a resources map that shows where water and other emergency supplies can be easily located.

Although it's only three years old, the Quesada block party is exceptional in scope. So much going on, it seems like it would take an army of professional event planners working day and night to pull it off.

"[The planning] doesn't feel like a lot," Dariotis said.

The street is the ultimate leveling mechanism. Public space is the only place anywhere where everyone is equal. In good public space, every kind of person is present.

—Adam Greenfield

"It's because each person just did what they want to," Abdulhaqq added.

It's a classic case of many hands making light work. There were already special skills waiting behind every front door on the block, ready to burst out. And the party brought all those skills into the street.

During the event, one neighbor led tours of their backyard chicken coop. Another gave chair massages at a wellness tent. The '80s cover band that played in the afternoon? That was a neighbor, too. As was the leader of the middle school dance troupe that performed, and the artist that coordinated the making of mosaic pavers for the community garden.

It wasn't just a party: it was an exhibition of all of the ingenuity and talent that was there on the block, waiting to be tapped.

And for anyone wondering whether their own street might have the same potential?

"Anybody can do it if they work together," Abdulhaqq said. "You're going to find those artists on every block; they're just not coming outside. This could be happening everywhere. This could be all of San Francisco. We've just got to be neighbors."

WANT MORE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS? SUBSCRIBE TO THE LIGHT'S EMAIL NEWSLETTER AT WWW.IELIGHTSF.COM/SUBSCRIBE