

# LABORFEST

WALKING TOUR AND HISTORY OF UNION SPONSORED  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING: ST FRANCIS SQUARE  
COOPERATIVE

Norm Young, Coop leader and guide

Jimmye Bynum and members of St. Francis Square  
Walking Club

## Redevelopment A-1 and Origin of St. Francis Square

From FoundSF

Historical Essay

by Carol Cuenod

In memoriam to recent historian, died June 3, 2015



Geary Boulevard corridor looking west from Laguna, August 1961.

Photo: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

In the early to mid 1950s, A-1 began with families and businesses being removed by eminent domain, and the properties being completely bulldozed. The first action in the heart of the demolition area was to widen of Geary St. to an eight lane expressway to move traffic through the Fillmore into the Richmond District with tunnels under Fillmore St. and Presidio/Masonic. The dislocated families and businesses were scattered with no foreseeable ability to return for the cleared land lay fallow for several years. The first plans for rebuilding were high-rise luxury apartments—Cathedral Hill Tower and Plaza, the Carrilon Tower, the Eichler's, the Sequoias, and St. Mary's Cathedral crowning the top—all upscale apartments located on the newly-named "Cathedral Hill." In 1960, Redevelopment set aside three blocks for affordable garden apartments. This would eventually become St. Francis Square Cooperative.



The Western Addition Area A-1  
The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

AERO PHOTOGRAPHERS

5/22/50

Photo: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

The Square was sponsored by the ILWU-PMA Pension Fund (ILWU is the International Longshore and Warehouse Union; PMA is Pacific Maritime Association, made up of representatives of shipowners and stevedore companies and is the body which negotiates contracts with the unions of longshore and seagoing unions). Lou Goldblatt, ILWU Int'l Secretary-Treasurer played the key role. I wondered how Goldblatt came to conceive of this idea—how did this Union leader's interest in housing come about?



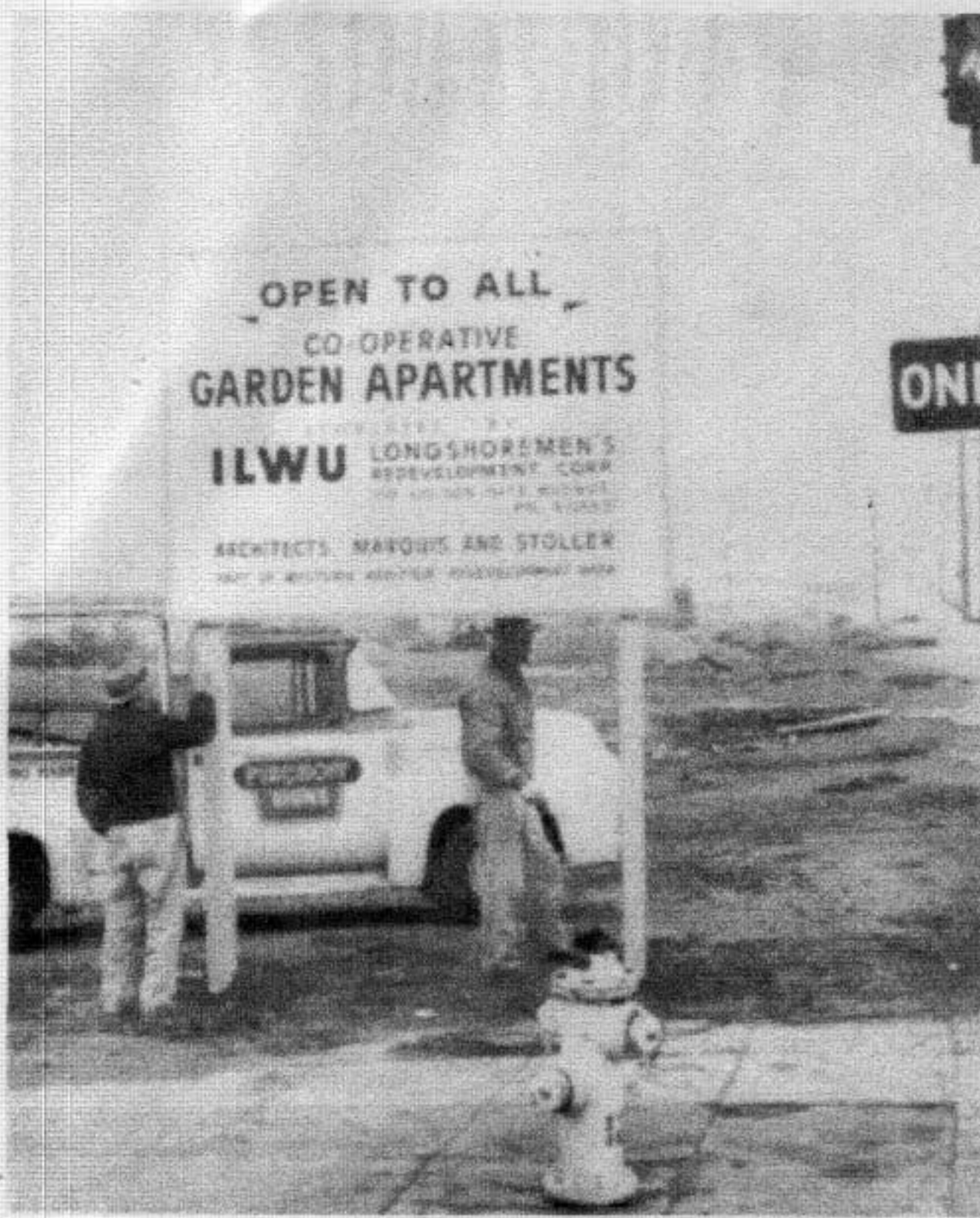
**Jack Hack, Harry Bridges, and Lou Goldblatt, 1951.**

*Photo: ILWU Archives*

I checked Lou Goldblatt's oral history, which had a few pages on the subject. To quote: "I happened to get the idea that there was no reason why the pension funds (which had been negotiated in 1950 and were accumulating a great amount of money) should just be laying around being invested in high grade securities. I thought there was no reason why that money shouldn't be used to build some low-cost housing. I knew a little about what I was trying to do, because my brother had been a builder for years. In conversation with him, I picked up how much money was taken off the top before a house was sold; between the interim financing, the advertising, the amount of profit, altogether there was at least 20% that went off the top, leaving aside profit to the guy who was doing the building. This was all money that could be saved.

"Initially the man I tried to work with was Kenneth Saysette, the treasurer of the Pacific Maritime Ass'n. He was pretty much of the old school. He wasn't too hot to try it. Finally, a breakthrough came when I was approached by Justin Herman of the Redevelopment Agency. He said there was a big hunk of land available for moderate-income garden apartments. I had two long sessions with J. Paul St. Sure, the head of PMA, and he said, "Go ahead." The trustees were generally amenable, but a little bit skeptical. After all, it was a financial venture; was it prudent? Would it pay enough returns? I thought all those bases could be covered, and eventually they were."

The ILWU-PMA Trustees formed the ILWU Longshore Redevelopment Corporation which put together a proposal to the Redevelopment Agency along with expertise of Hal Dunleavy who headed a real estate research company and Claude Stoller, an architect with Marquis & Stoller. The proposal was put before the ILWU-PMA Trustees in May 1960, and to the Western Addition Redevelopment Project in June 1960. Documents I've collected also include the approval of the proposal and sale of the land to the ILWU Longshore Redevelopment Corporation.



**St. Francis cooperative apartments advertising sign in 1961, before construction begins.**

*Photo: San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library*

Construction began in 1962 and was completed near end of 1963. It was an unusual project, in that the final cost to the families who would buy homes in the co-op, determined the limits of its overall construction cost. The original plans came in \$1M over budget, and the contractor and architect had to make changes necessary to remain "affordable." It had to be altered to reduce the final cost so that the down payment (the cost of a co-op share) would be \$410 for a one-bedroom unit to \$610 for a 3-bedroom unit, and the monthly payment would be \$84 to \$140 which would include mortgage payment, utilities, insurance, taxes, and reserves for repairs and maintenance.

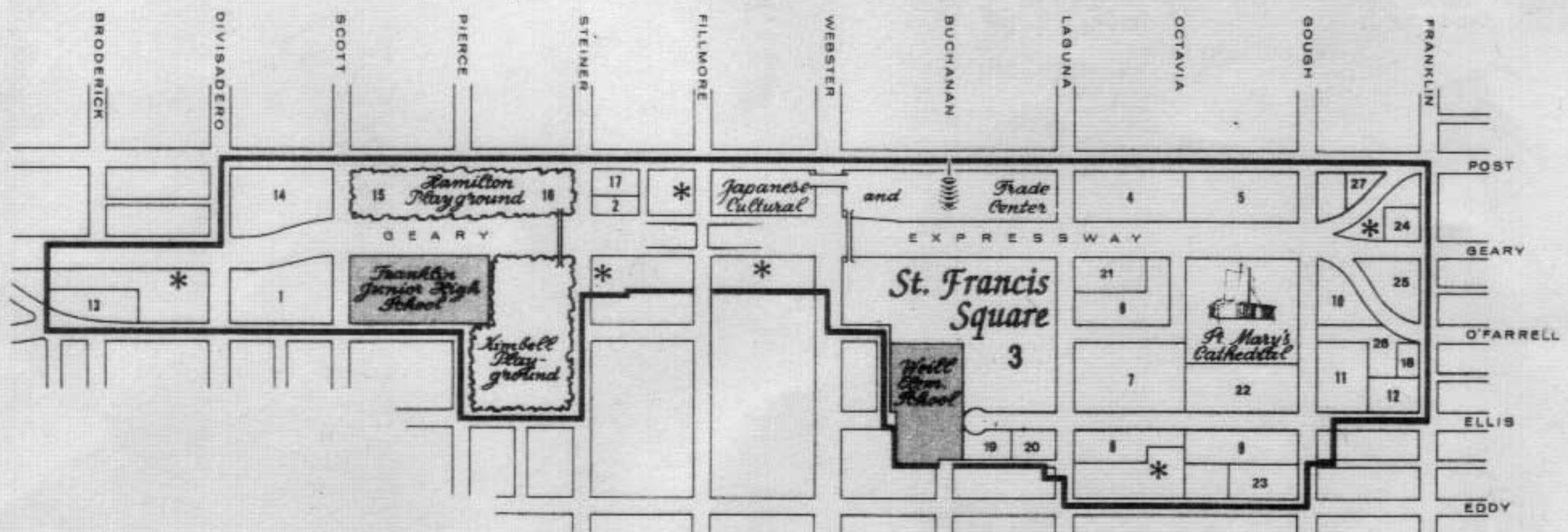
# Design History

by Clare Cooper and Phyllis Hackett

Condensed from: Analysis of the Design Process at Two Moderate Income Housing Developments; WORKING PAPER No. 80--June 1968

## REDEVELOPMENT SETS THE STAGE

The event sequence leading to construction of St. Francis Square officially began August 2, 1948 with a vote by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. At that quiet moment in history, the Supervisors adopted a San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) plan designating the "Western Addition Project Area A-1" as a blighted area in need of redevelopment.



By November 1954, the Board of Supervisors approved the final Redevelopment Plan. Three blocks were "zoned M-4 (medium density residential with restrictions on height, density, set-back, distance between buildings, minimum room size, amount and nature of parking provision). Proposals for redevelopment were subject to design review by the Agency, and to non-discriminatory leasing or sale of dwellings."

The plan slowly went into effect. By 1959, 95% of the people were displaced and 70% of the land was cleared. Agency officials established three key policies which contributed to the genesis of St. Francis Square:

- A negotiated bid sale policy for tight control over development.
- Reserving portions of A-1 for families.
- Insuring that some of A-1 is developed for moderate income families.

The Redevelopment land sale brochure stipulated that the award for the St. Francis Square site would go to the developer who best met the Agency's criteria for architectural design and moderate rentals. Agency director Justin Herman contacted union and church groups, seeking a non-profit sponsor, and if possible, a cooperative development.

### ENTER THE LONGSHOREMEN

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Concurrent with Redevelopment activity, the Board of the ILWU-PMA Pension Funds began exploring the use of a Pension Fund grant to promote housing for Union members. The trustees considered a sub-division in Marin County but decided against it, focusing their search on the City.

They agreed to the principle of investing in non-profit housing that wouldn't compete with housing produced by profit-seeking developers. It had to be affordable by Union members, and it must be for families.

In February 1960, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency invited bids for 6.9 acres to be constructed as "garden apartments" for moderate income families. Judgements were to be based on architectural quality. Bidders could offer their own definition of "moderate" rentals.

The executive committee of the ILWU invested \$2,000 to defray the cost of putting together a proposal. Pension Fund trustees committed half a million dollars as "seed" money for development. The Union and the Pension Fund trustees invited submissions from several architectural firms. They hired Hal Dunleavy as coordinator and economic consultant; Hal participated in the selection of an architectural team who would deliver a design against a time line.

## Tribute to the ILWU



**Harry Bridges**, president of the ILWU for forty years until retirement in 1977, and ILWU-PMA trustee, won pensions for longshoremen and established the fund which seeded the money to build St. Francis Square.

**I**t is not an accident that our weekly "Friday Flyer" declares the Square is "dedicated to the idea that all races, religions and beliefs can live together in harmony." That simple but powerful statement became our motto because two waterfront legends, Harry Bridges and Lou Goldblatt, built the Square, not with their hands, but with their hearts, minds, and imaginations.

Both men early saw the need for low-to-moderate housing in the redevelopment area of Western Addition. As Harry put it shortly after a meeting with San Francisco Mayor Christopher in June 1960, "most urban renewal programs can be described as taking from the poor and selling to the rich." Mr. Bridges also noted that seven out of ten families evicted from the redevelopment area were non-white.

Having obtained very positive responses from a housing survey by waterfront workers, Lou Goldblatt worked to get the \$500,000 seed money from the ILWU-PMA pension fund, to choose the architects and landscape designers, and to submit the final and winning plan to the Redevelopment Agency.

Serious difficulties still lay ahead, such as escalating cost estimates, San Francisco and FHA building codes and requirements, street closures, and second thoughts by the ILWU's Park West Redevelopment Corporation, the organization set up to operate the development until it could become self-sustaining and self-governing. Lou shepherded his project through all these time-consuming, energy-absorbing pitfalls, and month by month what had only been an idea began to take shape: foundations, plumbing and electrical lines, walls, floors, doors and windows, sidewalks, trees, and shrubs and grasses. Finally came the people, the cooperators.

Lou's achievement was remarkable. From an initial invitation from the Redevelopment Agency to prospective developers, through a survey of ILWU rank and file, to the years-long process of getting St. Francis Square funded, approved, and built, Lou Goldblatt won out. His legacy of a caring, progressive activism survives in the lives of the children who grew up here, some of whom are now themselves Members, in the people who have come and left their mark on the Co-op, and in those hardy "original members" who still live here.

Lou Goldblatt, always a worker, often an organizer, a builder of more than just housing. Lou's remarkable life includes:



Lou Goldblatt worked to get the \$500,000 seed money from the ILWU-PMA pension fund, to choose the architects and landscape designers, and to submit the final and winning plan to the Redevelopment Agency.

- Born in New York City of working class Jewish Lithuanian immigrants in 1910
- Migrated to California; BA from UCLA in 1931
- Fired from work in Owens, Illinois for union organizing
- Joined ILA Local 3844 in 1934; elected Vice President in 1936 and took part in the deadly strike of 1936
- Elected Secretary Treasurer of California CIO 1938-1942
- Sent to organize union members in Chicago and helped author a report to Admiral Land and Lew Douglas of the War Shipping Administration in 1942
- Elected Secretary-Treasurer of the ILWU and Secretary of the California Council on Health Plan Alternatives, 1943
- Circulates housing project questionnaire to all ILWU longshoremen, ship clerks and walking bosses, 1955
- Named president of the ILWU's Longshore Parkwest Development Corporation, 1960
- Highly praised by many labor and government dignitaries at the St. Francis Square dedication ceremony, August 1963, Lou Goldblatt stated, "St. Francis Square will stand as an example of successful non-profit co-operative housing."
- "Where it (St. Francis Square) goes from here is entirely up to you."
- Passed away in 1983

### References.

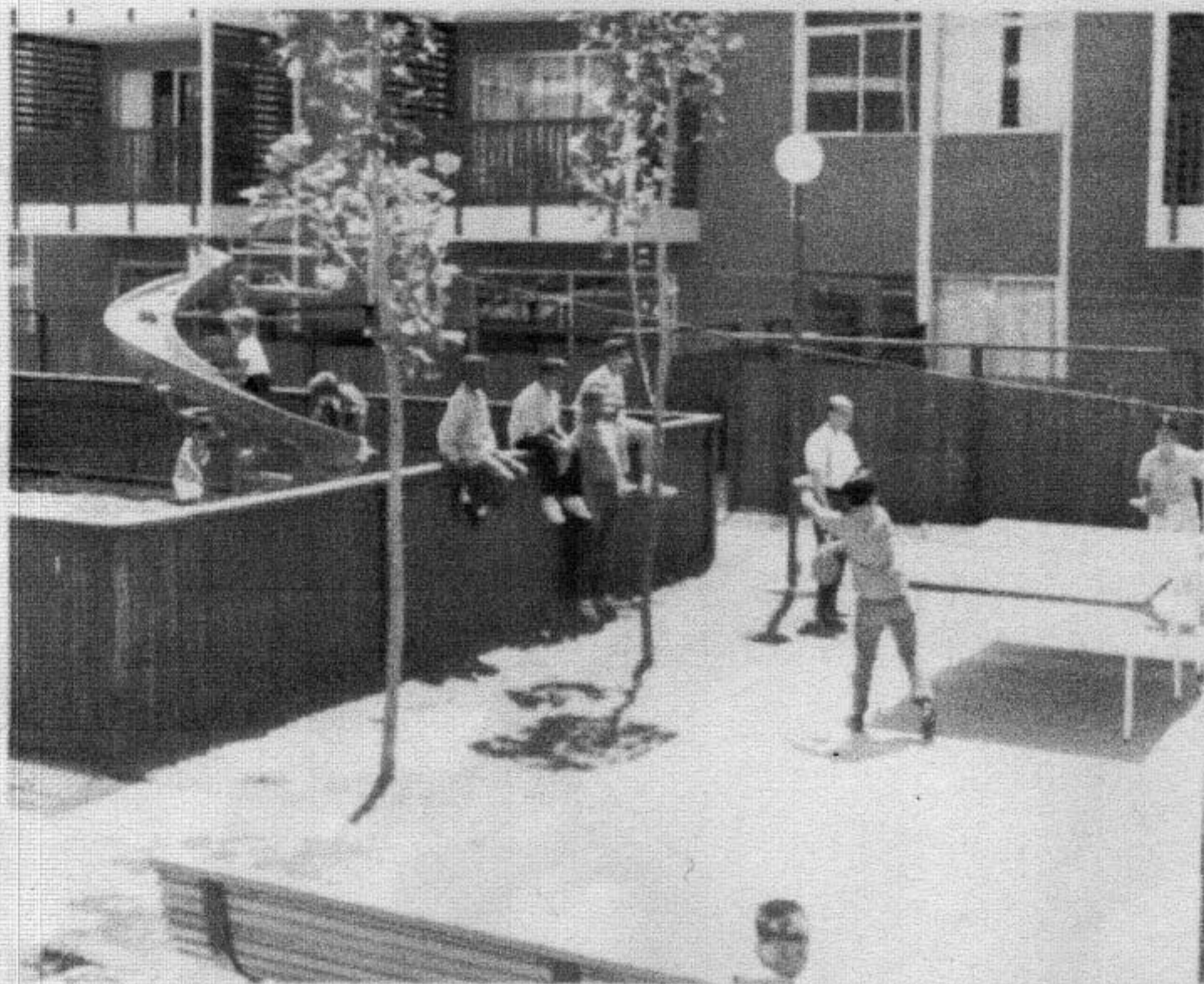
ILWU Dispatchers; ILWU Library/Archives. Special thanks to Curtis McClain (Secretary/Treasurer of ILWU) and Gene Dennis Brana, the chief librarian, ILWU.



*Photo: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency*

Two people stand out as exemplary for the creation of the St. Francis Square community as it developed after construction was completed—they are Ruth Maguire and Revels Cayton.

The Sales Office opened under the management of Ruth Maguire. Some original members who still live here remember her special efforts to get them approved by the rigid criteria of the FHA, our governing body. At the end of the sales period, Ruth submitted a 47-page report, a sociological document including summaries of how they solicited applicants, attitudes of applicants toward apartment living, toward an integrated co-op, and its neighborhood and schools. It also included reports and charts on "Why Sales Were Lost," "Racial Composition of Families," "Ages of Adults—Ages of Children," "Types of Families," "Income of Families," "Residents Occupations," "Union Affiliation," and much more. The accomplishment of her sales office, records that the dream of new homes for multi-racial, moderate income families was more than a high-sounding goal, it was a reality.



**August 20, 1964, children playing at the St. Francis Square Housing Development Play Center.**

*Photo: San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library*

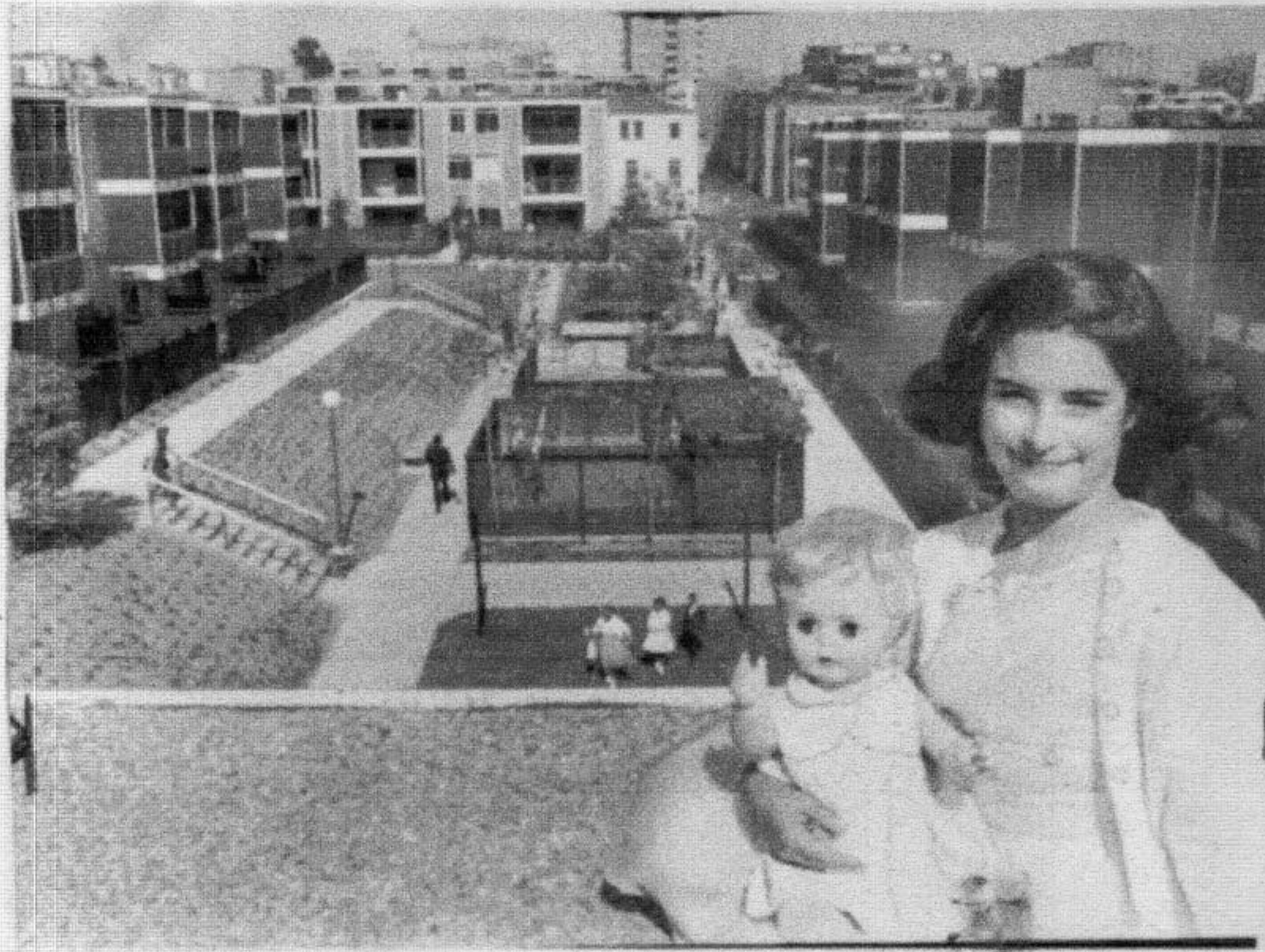
Josephine Solomon wrote a Letter to the Editor of the *Chronicle*:

*"I've just moved into my new home in St. Francis Square...and living here is quite clearly going to be exhilarating and, more important, the best possible place in which I can raise my children. About 100 families have already moved in ... and we have representatives of all races and colors living together as neighbors. There is no more beautiful sight in this town than our marvelous, mixed up collection of white, brown and yellow children playing together in the sunny community square every afternoon."*

One of her daughters, Susan, came back to the Square with her husband, Fred Pecker, and raised their two children here.

Revels Cayton became the first manager. Before the Square was completed, he was busy building ties with the remaining Fillmore community—the schools, churches, the Buchanan "Y" in the middle of the Square. He didn't bring a great deal of experience in the area of building maintenance, but spent time organizing to build a better community both in the Square and in the surrounding neighborhood. Parents of children at Raphael Weill and Ben Franklin schools were soon

encouraged to join the Western Addition Committee for Better Schools. Within the Square, he organized many social activities. The first Sunday after I moved in there was a "Plant Day" when Turner Square was filled with potted plants so the new cooperators could spend a Sunday choosing plants to beautify their decks and gardens while socializing, enjoying refreshments, getting to know one another. Yardbirds, volunteer work parties, began early because when we moved in there was some landscaping, but many areas were unplanted dirt and sand. Work parties almost always ended in potluck lunches and socializing. And 45 years later it still happens.



**August 7, 1963, Portrait of Julie Solomon with view of St. Francis Square housing co-op in background.**

*Photo: San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library*

Other activities included a Friday night bowling league, Sunday basketball games at the Buchanan "Y". In 1965, five cooperators participated in the civil rights march from Selma, Alabama. They were supported by other shareholders and friends who collected 500 pounds of food and needed supplies for their march. And many committees were formed. Most supported and reported to the Board of Directors. These committees began early and continue still—Finance, Recreation, Building and Grounds, Elections, Publications, a large number of residents became involved in the co-op's operations. When I checked several years ago, approximately 1/3 of the families were still involved in committee activity.

A great deal of Revels' social organizing caused controversy. Some thought a manager should limit his work to traditional real estate practices. By our second year, the five members of our Board of Directors became locked in a three-two split. Among the issues of contention were what the duties of a manager should be. With a tremendous effort by many active members, including ILWU members living here, that Board was recalled and a new unified and functional Board of Directors carried on which supported Revels Cayton as manager.

To heal the faction-split cooperative, Revels and the newly elected Directors planned a picnic in Tichenor Square. The *SF Chronicle* reported the picnic as "A 'Postwar' Party..."

*"With a mixture of public prayer, private expression of hope—and a generous lacing of gaiety, St. Francis Square had itself a picnic yesterday...It was a valiant venture by San Francisco's faction-torn interracial cooperative apartment development to start a new life...."*

*As rock 'n' roll bounced from loudspeakers, several hundred children danced and played on a nearby sloping lawn, white,*

*brown and yellow adult hands served hamburgers, steak teriyaki, piroshki, rice balls and apple pie to other white, brown and yellow hands. Said one tall Negro, "This is what the place is all about."*

This pot-luck picnic was the first of what has become an annual event which continues today.

Later, Revels resigned to take a position as Deputy Director of the San Francisco Housing Authority; followed by an appointment by Mayor Alioto to be Deputy Mayor of Social Programs. This was a position which his time at St. Francis Square provided excellent experience. His obituary in Circling the Square 30 years later captures the essence of the leadership and love between Revels and the Square.

"In total, Revels was with us only three short years, but in that time he set the tone and helped define the kind of cooperative and community St. Francis Square would become."

Revels gave an initial direction, but the leadership which carried on was strengthened by ILWU members including Leroy King, Henry McKnight, Tom Tsukahara, Jack Olsen, Norman Young, Al Lannon, and Carol Schwartz—not a member, but an employee of.... Their leadership and that of many others was committed to making the Square follow the goals of original founders. Together with the ILWU, the Square's influence on the impact of A-2 Redevelopment tried to mitigate some of the worst action of the A-1 Program.

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Affordable Housing Cooperatives in San Francisco

Co-op Name	Street Address	Units	Section 8 or subsidized	Type of Housing	Year Built/Form ed
Ammel Park	656 GROVE ST	120	95	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1970
Freedom West I	820 MCALLISTER ST	192	64	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1974
Freedom West II	621 GOUGH ST	190	63	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1975
Loren Miller Homes	950 BUCHANAN, BLDG #2 ST	105	62	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1972
Martin Luther King/Marcus Garvey Sq.	1680 EDDY ST	211	211	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1960
Midtown Park Apartments	1415 Scott St	139	50	Rental in process of converting to Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1960
St. Francis Square	10 Bertie Minor Lane	299		Stock Cooperative	1962
Columbus United Co-ops	53 Columbus Ave.	21	0	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	2011
Baker's Dozen	733 Baker St.	13		Zero-Equity Cooperative or Resident Operated Nonprofit (Co-housing)	1957
Purple House	964-966 Oak Street	10		Zero-Equity Cooperative or Resident Operated Nonprofit (Co-housing)	2012
Purple Rose	1531 Fulton St.	10		Limited Equity Housing Cooperative (Co-housing)	2002
Central Page	Central @ Page	8		Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1983
Diamond View	2960 A Addison	120	95	Affordable Housing Nonprofit Corporation	1970
Northridge	1 Ardath Ct	300	300	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	
Glenridge	137 Addison	275	209	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1967
Unity Peace & Freedom	220 Cashmere	94	88	Limited Equity Housing Cooperative	1973
	<b>Total Units in SF:</b>	<b>2,107</b>	<b>692</b>		

**Carol Cuénod(1929 - 2015)**

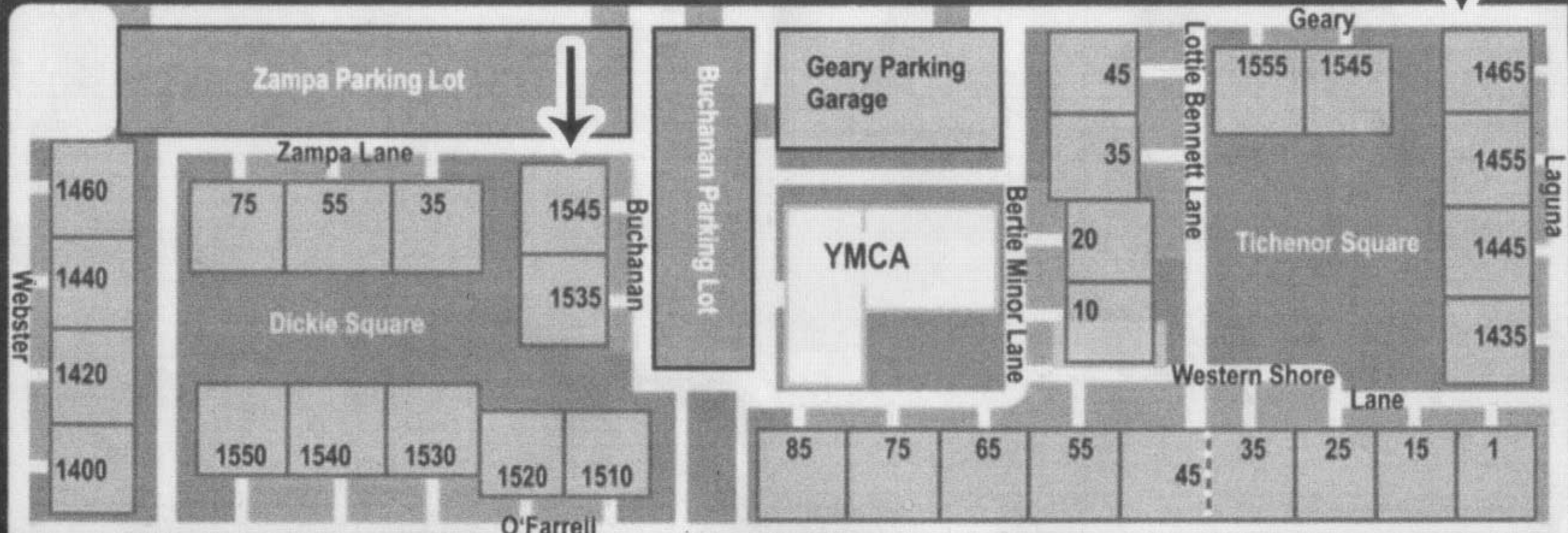


Carol Cuénod (Schwartz)  
March 4, 1929-June 3, 2015

At 86, Carol died from Diabetes-related complications surrounded by the love of her family. Survived by her children: Rita Alderucci, Anna Fuller (Paul Fuller) & Bill Schwartz (Kristen Schwartz); and grandchildren: Cory Fuller, Gabe & Nate Schwartz, Dylan Adams. As a young adult, Carol was a student and Chorus member of the California Labor School. Carol worked for over 20 years for the ILWU in SF, starting as a clerical worker and retiring as Librarian of their Research Library. After retiring, she moved to Boston, found a job at MIT in their Industrial Liaison Program and spent weekends as a tourist. Returning to SF Carol worked at the Labor Archives and Research Center at SFSU and was a very active member of the Bay Area Labor History Workshop. Carol was an avid walker and traveler. An original resident/shareholder of St. Francis Square Cooperative, Carol served many years on the Board of Directors and was very active in all aspects of cooperative living. A Celebration of Carol's life will be held at a later date.

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GEARY STREET



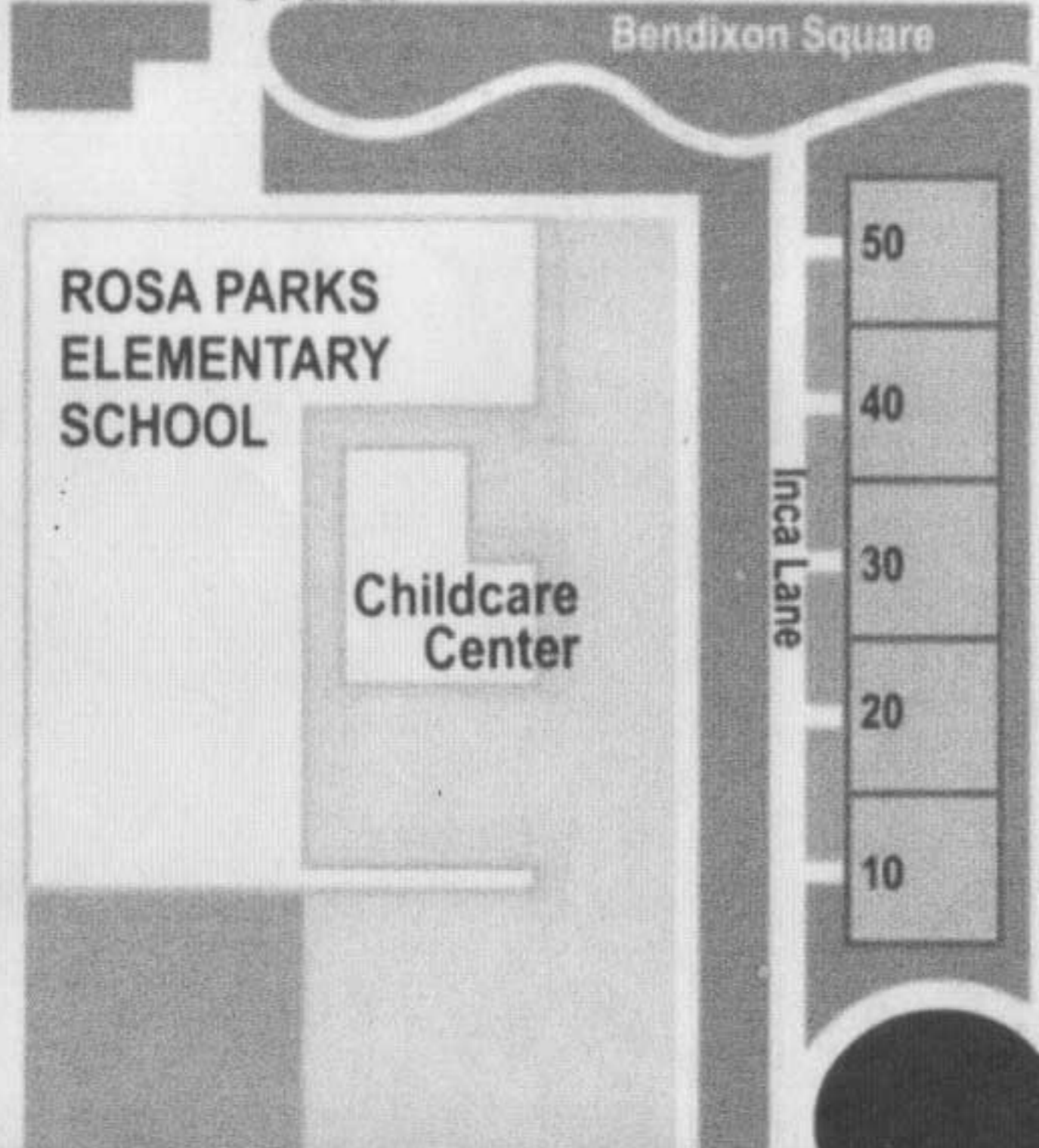
WEBSTER STREET

O'FARRELL STREET

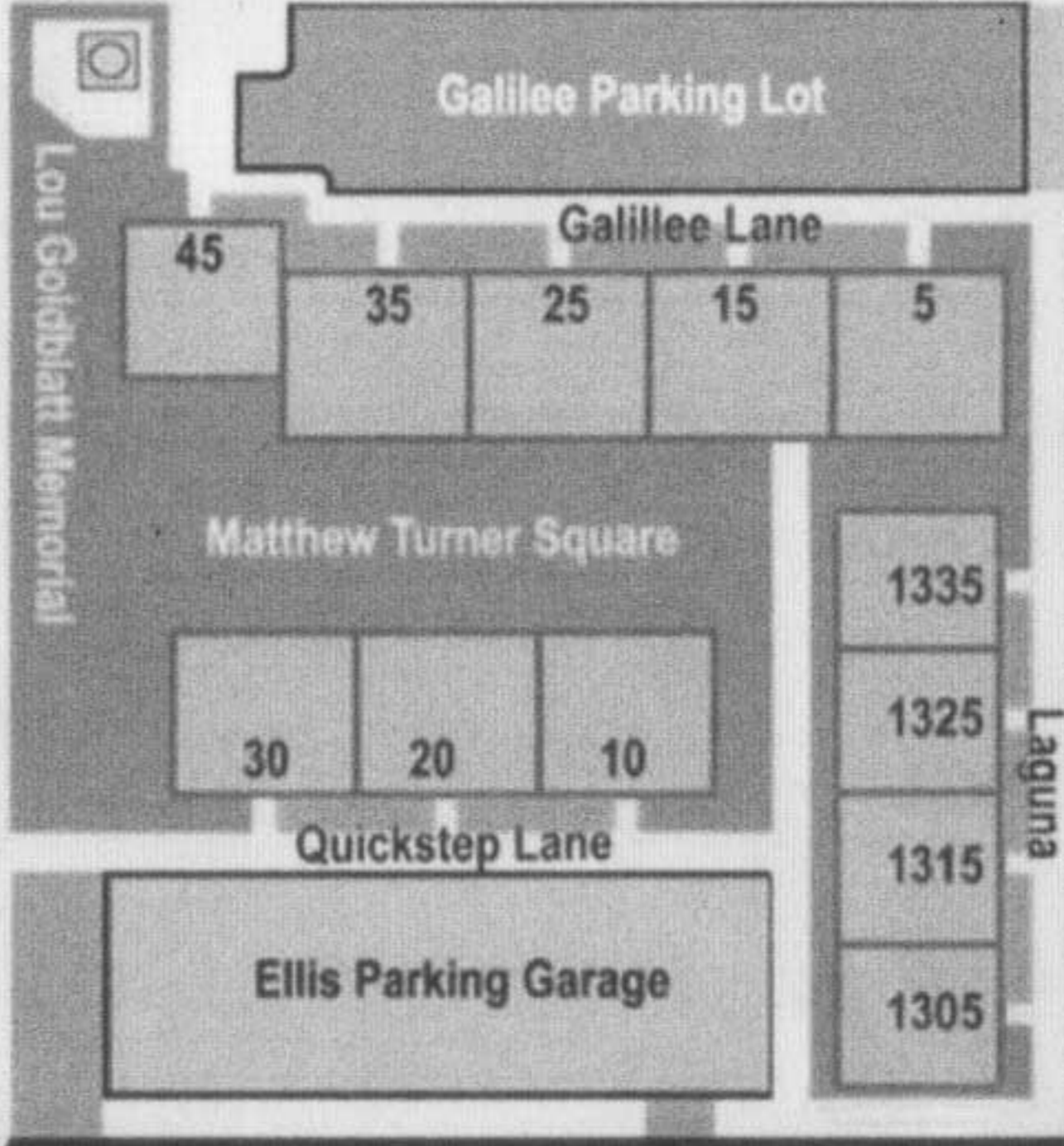


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