

Friends of the Hidden Garden Steps

Hidden Garden Steps: Moving Toward Installation



Colette Crutcher, continuing to work on the Hidden Garden Steps ceramic-tile mosaic to be installed on 16th Avenue, between Kirkham and Lawton streets in San Francisco's Inner Sunset District

Discussions are underway to arrange for the installation of the Hidden Garden Steps ceramic-tile mosaic, major onsite erosion control work may be finished by September 2013, the mosaic itself could be ready for installation by fall 2013, and expansion of the gardens-in-progress are continuing

through the donation of succulents, California native plants, and other drought-tolerant additions.

Fundraising, furthermore, has entered a final intense phase. Tile sales will probably end sometime within the next two months. An independent campaign on Indiegogo to incorporate a tribute to San Francisco firefighters into the Steps mosaic is in its final days. And donations are continuing to arrive steadily on an almost daily basis. Small and large donations continue to be important to completion of the project, so project organizing committee members are actively seeking additional financial support from individuals, local business owners, and organizations that offer grants for volunteer-driven, community-based projects designed to strengthen the sense of community that already exists within our neighborhoods.

Our San Francisco Department of Public Works partners have been particularly active on the Steps over the past several months. They replaced a severely-damaged retaining wall and an entire flight of steps that had moved out of alignment from

the rest of the 148-step structure; are nearly finished with the terracing of the gardens at the top of the Steps, and are preparing to install a viewing platform that will provide a place to linger and take in the sweeping view that has been cleared through tree trimming and other onsite work by volunteers and in-kind donations of professional services. DPW staff is also about to engage in the final two major projects to be completed before the mosaic by artists Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher can be installed: extensive repairs of chips and cracks that have developed since the original steps were built in 1926, and installation of a major retaining wall to halt the slippage of soil that has clogged gutters and drains on either side of the Steps for decades.

While onsite monthly clean-ups and plantings continue (second Saturday of each month, 1 – 3 pm on the 16th Avenue steps between Kirkham and Lawton streets; tools provided, no reservations required), organizing committee members are also arranging final events to promote community engagement. The third of three indoor drop-in opportunities to help build pieces of the ceramic-tiled mosaic has been scheduled for Saturday, July 20, 2013 from 1-5 pm in the community meeting hall at St. John of God church on the corner of 5th Avenue and Irving Street. More information will be posted on the Hidden Garden Steps website (<http://hiddengardensteps.org>) and included in the next monthly newsletter, along with information about other public events to promote the project.



Calendar:

- **Steps Organizing Committee Meeting**
Saturday, June 1, 10-11:30 am
- **June Monthly Clean-up:**
Saturday, June 8, 1-3 pm, on the Steps
- **Final Ceramic-Tile Workshop**
Saturday, July 20, 1-3 pm, St. John of God (5th Avenue & Irving)

N.B.: Please don't miss out on this second chance to be part of a ceramic-tiled steps project in San Francisco's Inner Sunset District. To add your name to the mosaic, visit our website (<http://hiddengardensteps.org>), contact us at hiddengardensteps@gmail.com, or call Paul Signorelli at 415.681.5224. You can also join the campaign to honor firefighters—deadline is 5/22/13 ; more info is at the bottom of p. 2 of this newsletter.



A Project of San Francisco Parks Alliance & a Department of Public Works Street Parks Partner

Hidden Garden Steps c/o San Francisco Parks Alliance, 451 Hayes Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102

(415) 621-3260 hiddengardensteps.org

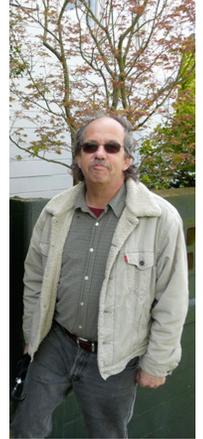


Nick Elsner: The Pleasure of Making It Work

Nick Elsner, Senior Plan Checker for the San Francisco Department of Public Works (DPW) Street-Use & Mapping unit, has been a key City/County liaison and partner for the Moraga Steps and Hidden Garden Steps (HGS) projects. The following interview, conducted via email in May 2013, provides a glimpse of how Nick works with community groups and offers guidance to others interested in pursuing community-based projects on City/County property.

HGS: Let's start with basics: can you tell us, in a few lines, about what attracted you to DPW and what your day-to-day job involves?

Elsner: I've now been with DPW for almost 30 years; thus, thinking back to 1984, I was actually interested in the survey field and, through a friend of my parents, was able to land a job working as a draftsman plotting survey notes for the City. Right away, I felt I would enjoy this since some of my first "drafting projects" were renovations of certain playgrounds where I played as a kid....brought back all sorts of memories. In early 1987, this same associate of my parents, who happened to be my boss, thought my skills would be better utilized in permits; thus, I was transferred over to the Permit Division of DPW. My initial thought was "OMG, I'll be pushing paper the rest of my life"....and was I ever wrong. My day-to-day job is pretty much across the board, anything and everything that involves the public right-of-way and work proposed thereto. Based on my historic knowledge, I'm often the "go to" person among other City agencies, including the Mayor's Office and Board of Supervisors.



HGS: Moving into the sort of project we're discussing: Are you involved in many of the DPW Street Parks Program projects, or have the Steps projects been unusual in terms of your day-to-day work?

Elsner: I don't typically get involved in other Street Parks Programs (those are mostly handled by Sandra Zuniga of our Operations Staff), but Sandra does also come to me for advice, questions, when it may involve modifying an existing right-of-way or existing improvements within said right-of-way. The steps project has definitely been one of the more unusual—although very enjoyable—projects I've worked on.

HGS: Any pleasures or challenges you care to discuss vis-a-vis working on the two Steps projects?

Elsner: The pleasure I got of "making it work" and getting the permits approved....

HGS: Any special challenges or rewards you care to discuss in terms of the sorts of collaborations that are required when community groups approach DPW with projects like the Moraga Steps and Hidden Garden Steps?

Elsner: Just a great group of people that I worked with on both projects: very patient, understood that it wouldn't be "easy," although definitely easier the second time around with the Hidden Garden Steps.

HGS: Any advice you would offer others who want to do a Steps project or any other sort of community project involving DPW and other local agencies?

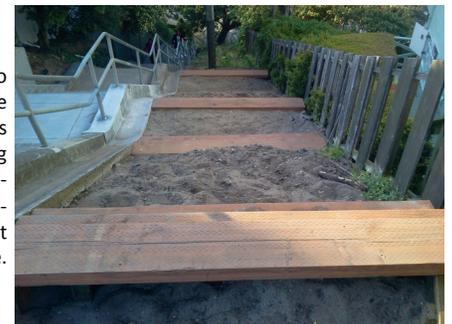
Elsner: Contact us early on in the process—and often...we don't mind—to get all the facts about types of permits, fees, maintenance responsibilities, potential liability, etc.

Logo Contest Deadline Extended to May 31

Entries will be accepted through May 31, 2013 for anyone interested in submitting a logo design to be used to promote the Hidden Garden Steps project. There is no entry fee. Hidden Garden Steps will retain the copyright with control over the use of the winning logo.

For more information or to submit an entry, please contact us or send a completed logo to hiddengardenlogo@yahoo.com and include the artist's name, address, telephone number, and email, and, if applicable, the name of the school the artist is attending.

DPW efforts to terrace the Steps gardens are continuing with construction of a viewing platform at the top of site.



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Help honor San Francisco firefighters with a place on the Hidden Garden Steps:

<http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/an-artistic-thanks-to-firefighters>

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