

Changes Coming for Jane Warner Plaza

Tables and chairs are back at The Castro's Jane Warner Plaza, inviting all to sit for coffee, lunch and to people watch.

Andrea Aiello, Executive Director for the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District, said the chairs were fully occupied the minute they were placed in the plaza. "It was amazing. The first couple of days the chairs were out people just kept thanking me. The community is very happy to be able to sit in the Jane Warner Plaza once again." The new furniture was paid for by the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District.

The colorful tables and chairs are part of a new effort by the Castro/Upper Market CBD to manage and activate Jane Warner Plaza so it becomes a more useful and enjoyable space for the neighborhood. In addition to the furniture, two new Plaza Stewards will be on site from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Wednesday to Sunday to manage the furniture, keep the plaza clean, remind people not to smoke, greet and assist performers and vendors, welcome visitors and generally be an extra set of eyes and ears on the plaza.

"Creating Jane Warner Plaza in 2009 was an exciting idea. It transformed one of the city's most dangerous intersections into a public space," Aiello said. "But to a great extent the space was left to manage itself." As a result, the plaza developed a reputation for sometimes being a purposeless unkempt eyesore.

The CBD studied similar public spaces that have been successful in San Francisco, including Mechanics Monument Plaza downtown, and across the nation, such as Flatiron Plaza in Manhattan. The CBD learned that, in many cases, successful plazas are actively managed to encourage public use. So the CBD worked with Supervisor Wiener and applied for city grants to bring that same level of attentiveness to The Castro.

Activities are also part of the plan. Events and performances are scheduled for the plaza for every weekend through October, including the Klipptones, Sundance Saloon, and the Trolley Dances. The plaza will also host the newest Pop Up Art Fair: the Castro Bazaar, featuring art by local artists, July 20th and August 17th from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. A complete schedule of the Live! In the Castro events can be found at <http://castrocbd.org/live-in-the-castro-events/>

Other changes and improvements in the works include an LED lighting installation to beautify the plaza with increased illumination. The installation, called The Seed by Aphidoidea, was selected through a competitive public process, in consultation the MTA, DPW and PUC, plus input from local experts in LED lighting. The installation is intended to be temporary, lasting two – three years, and could be installed next spring.

Finally, the plaza pavement will be replaced. The original colored asphalt had installation problems and broke apart with pressure washing. Under the terms of the original neighborhood sidewalk improvement contract, new durable pavement will be installed this summer at no new cost to taxpayers.

Anyone interested in helping the Castro CBD activate Jane Warner Plaza should contact info@castrocbd.org or call 415-500-1181.