GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Delancey Street Embarcadero Triangle is the self-built and self-managed home and workplace for San Francisco’s Delancey Street Foundation. Delancey Street is a unique community of former members of “America’s permanent underclass”—hard-core substance abusers, criminals, unemployable welfare recipients, homeless people, and unskilled and/or functionally illiterate individuals—determined to change and improve their lives. The complex was built primarily by community residents using donated materials; no public funding was involved.

Founded in San Francisco in 1971, the Delancey Street Foundation is named for the street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side where European immigrants banded together at the turn of the century to support each other and learn how to enter the mainstream of American society. Today—with some 800 residents in five locations around the country and with thousands of graduates leading successful, law-abiding, and drug-free lives—the foundation is widely respected as a most unusual and signal ally successful residential self-help program of education and treatment.

Delancey Street uses the concepts of self-reliance, commitment, and hard work to help its residents develop and improve academic, vocational, interpersonal, and social skills while they rebuild the self-esteem they need to lead successful and rewarding lives in society’s mainstream. The community lives and functions as an extended family does; members take responsibility for each other and pool their energies and resources. Delancey Street prides itself on having no outside professional staff and providing all food, clothing, shelter, education, vocational training, therapy, and recreation at no cost to residents or taxpayers.

During the average four-year stay, a resident receives a high-school equivalency education and is trained in at least three marketable skills before graduating. The community currently runs a wide range of training options to provide residents with vocational experience. Some, such as a moving and trucking company, a printing operation, a catering ser-

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Housing over retail
- Contextual design
- Flexible commercial space
- Urban redevelopment site
- Handcrafted decorative elements

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Delancey Street Foundation
2563 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, California 94115
415-957-9800

ARCHITECT

Backen Arrigoni & Ross, Inc.
1660 Bush Street
San Francisco, California 94109
415-441-4771

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1992
plans designated the block for low-income housing, which did not generate the interest of conventional developers. Delancey Street, looking for a location to centralize and expand its local operations, became interested in the site in 1984. At the time, its businesses and residents were housed in several locations around the city.

Although the city had master-planned the site for housing, the land was zoned for maritime use, and guidelines set by the state land commission prevented the port from allowing nonmaritime uses. The state legislature passed special legislation to exempt the project from the commission guidelines and from tidelands rules. Approvals had been delayed for other reasons, too: The area was under study as the site for a new ballpark, and the Delancey Street project was also the first to come up for review under a new city law requiring development sites to be tested for contaminants.

Before the lease was granted, Delancey Street had to obtain approvals from surrounding landowners. The developers of the adjacent, upscale apartment projects objected until Mimi Silbert, Delancey Street’s president/CEO and a PhD in both criminology and psychology, presented compelling evidence that the Delancey community had a better record than conventional residential uses: Not only has there never been an arrest or violent incident on any of its premises, but also its residents are guaranteed to be drug-, alcohol-, and crime-free.

PLANNING/DESIGN

While negotiations for the site were underway, the community realized that it would require professional assistance with planning and design. Following an exhaustive search, Silbert recruited Howard Backen of Backen Arrigoni & Ross, a well-respected San Francisco-based firm with a broad range of experience. The assignment took seven years, including four on a pro bono basis. To gain insight into the community’s unique requirements, Backen methodically studied its operations, visited its existing facilities, and met with residents.

From the start, the concept for the facility was to create a high-quality, noninstitutional environment that would foster personal dignity and community pride. As plans took shape, Silbert and Backen were careful to size and detail the facility for no more than the number of residents that could comfortably be housed on the site. During the design process, Backen led residents on tours around the city to illustrate alternatives. Invariably, residents preferred classic, traditional styles and details to modern ones, which were often grim reminders of the correctional facilities where some had served their sentences.

With its rich materials and many distinctive handcrafted features, the complex does not fit the stereotype

THE SITE

On the waterfront in San Francisco’s South Beach neighborhood, a redeveloping area within walking distance of the business district, the 2.95-acre site is an irregularly shaped triangular block bounded by the Embarcadero, Brannan Street, and First Street. Adjacent blocks contain a mix of market-rate housing, commercial and industrial activities, and vacant land.

The parcel is owned by the Port of San Francisco, leased to the city’s redevelopment agency, and subleased to Delancey Street for a term of 66 years. City redevelopment

At the ground level, the central courtyard provides access to flexible spaces that serve as workplaces, storage facilities, and clothing and book exchanges for residents.
of low-income housing. If sold as condominiums, the units would probably fetch more than $350,000 each. In fact, the complex was intentionally designed with enough flexibility to permit conversion to market-rate uses. For example, a storage room in each unit contains the plumbing necessary to install a kitchen.

FINANCING

Once the plans had been completed and approved by the city building department, the foundation sent them out to several general contractors for bid. The bids received ranged from $27 million to $30 million. Delancey Street reckoned that, using in-house labor and donated goods and services, they could build the facility for less than half that amount. Financing for construction, however, proved difficult to obtain. Delancey Street was willing to put the project up as collateral and had a limited credit history. To start construction, it tapped $4.5 million in equity from the sale of two buildings it owned in the Richmond neighborhood and in Pacific Heights that had appreciated handomely over the years. It calculated that somewhere between $5 million and $10 million in construction financing was needed. During the first six months of construction, six or seven community-based banks sent back rejection slips because little about the project fit their lending requirements. Fortunately, the Bank of America heard about the project’s plight and came to the rescue in June 1988, offering a nontraditional, custom-designed, unsecured line of credit for $10 million. Using in-house labor with donated materials and professional services, construction came to approximately $14 million. Of this amount, roughly $7 million was raised from the sale of buildings, collected earnings, and $2.5 million in savings, while an additional $1 million was obtained from one-time grants. The remaining $6 million, borrowed from the Bank of America, was paid back ahead of schedule using some $1 million of donations, $2 million from the city’s affordable housing trust fund, and the remainder from foundation earnings.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction—which is of wood-frame over post-tension deck, sheathed in concrete plaster—was begun in October 1987 and completed by January 1991. Working with Perseus Construction as general contractor and assisted by members of the San Francisco Building Trades Council, residents provided nearly 80 percent of the labor and all of the ancillary support, including accounting, dealing with subcontractors, and ordering all products and materials. The effort was an unprecedented experience in vocational training, helping more than 250 formerly unemployable adults acquire skills in the building trades and related services. The state’s department of vocational rehabilitation put a number of residents through school to obtain contractors’ licenses to go hand-in-hand with their practical training, and several graduates are now running their own construction companies.

More than 3,000 businesses and individuals donated time, money, and materials to the project. Manufacturers and distributors from around the United States were asked to provide needed products. The design changed many times during construction, depending on which materials were available. Sometimes, materials were rejected to ensure consistency on the project’s exterior, but everyone learned to improvise and make adjustments on the interiors; for example, every bathroom has different fixtures from the one next door.

Residents took great pride in their work, and quality craftsmanship is found throughout. Walls were totally rebuilt if they were not perfectly straight; custom-designed stained-glass windows were made in the residents’ glass shop; residents even fabricated their own steel, first building a shop and all the equipment in it.

Streetfronts, which at first glance appear to be rows of smaller buildings, reflect the character and integrity of the city’s rich architectural heritage.

Reliance on donated construction materials called for considerable discipline. For example, the paving pattern on the podium level was custom-designed to make the best use of the tiles that became available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAND USE INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Area: 128,000 square feet (2.95 acres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dwelling Units: 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Density: 60 units per acre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Gross Building Area: 336,700 square feet |
| Residential: 259,700 square feet |
| Commercial: 54,400 square feet |
| Retail: 45,400 square feet |
| Restaurant: 7,800 square feet |
| Health club: 1,200 square feet |
| Community facilities: 22,600 |
| Recreation center: 7,800 square feet |
| Multipurpose meeting room: 4,000 square feet |
| Screening room: 2,600 square feet |
| Pool/spa pavilion: 1,200 square feet |
| Central residential dining area: 7,800 square feet |
| Central residential recreation area: 7,000 square feet |
| Gross Livable Area (total): 36,450 square feet |
| Total Parking Spaces: 179 |
| Number of Stories: 4 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESIDENTIAL INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio/1 bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio/2 bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bedroom/1-bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-bedroom/2-bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-bedroom/2-bath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENT COST INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual Cost Of Purchased Goods and Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Improvement Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Construction Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnishing Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Development Cost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Dollars in millions.
2. Including in-house labor.5
DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE
Planning Started: September 1984
Site Leased: September 1987
Construction Started: October 1987
Project Completed: January 1991

DIRECTIONS
From San Francisco International Airport:
Follow Highway 101 north for approximately nine miles. Before crossing the Bay Bridge,
exit at Bryant Street. Proceed east on Bryant
Street for about four blocks, and turn right onto
Beale Street. Follow Beale one block south to
the Embarcadero. The Delaney Street Embarcadero Triangle is located immediately to
the right, on the block bounded by the Embarcadero, Brannan Street, and Delancey (for-
merly First) Street. The main entrance is at
600 Embarcadero.
Driving Time: Approximately 15 minutes.

Key:
1 Residential
2 Resident Dining/Recreation Area
3 Residential Lobby
4 Reception
5 Mail Room
6 Multipurpose Room
7 Screening Room
8 Pool/Spa
9 Health Club
10 Auto Service (below)
11 Storage
12 Kitchen
13 Delicatessen
14 Restaurant
15 Retail/Commercial
16 Garden
17 Service Area
18 Ramp down to Parking
19 Parking

PRF STAFF
Frank H. Speck, Jr., Staff Vice President, Publications
D. Scott Middleton, Editor, Project Reference File
Nancy H. Stewart, Managing Editor
Ann Lenney, Copy Editor
Helene Y. Redmond, HYR Graphics, Layout
Betsy VanBuskirk, Art Director
Jeff Urbancic, Graphic Artist

PROJECT REFERENCE FILE is published quarterly and is intended as a resource tool for use by its subscribers in improving the quality of future projects. Data contained herein were made available by the development team and constitute a report on, not an endorsement of, the project by ULI—the Urban Land Institute.

Copyright 1992 by ULI—the Urban Land Institute
625 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-2930
Subscriptions are available at $70 per year for ULI members, $85 per year for nonmembers. Single issues are available at $4 each to PRF subscribers; $10.50 each to nonsubscribers. ISSN 0364-2925

METRIC CONVERSIONS
meters = feet x 0.305
kilometers = miles x 1.609
square meters = sq. ft. x 0.093
hectares = acres x 0.405
(1 hectare = 10,000 square meters)