



# San Francisco Chronicle

SFCHRONICLE.COM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2025

CONTAINS RECYCLED PAPER

\$3.00



Photos by Santiago Mejia/S.F. Chronicle

Alofa Laupua and his wife, Sandi, were spared possible eviction due to the Season of Sharing fund.

## SEASON OF SHARING

# Feet on the ground, eyes on the future

Fund came to rescue after couple lost jobs, missed rent

By Connor Letourneau  
STAFF WRITER

Sitting on her living room couch, Sandi Laupua glanced around her Santa Rosa apartment. Her 2-year-old grandson scooted a toy truck along the coffee table. Across from a wall covered in framed family photos was a small Christmas tree adorned with sparkling gold lights.

Not long ago, Sandi and her husband, Alofa, worried that they might have to spend the holidays in a homeless shelter — or worse. Now here they were, feeling comfortable enough to discuss where they should go on their first-ever

*Laupuas continues on A8*



Alofa Laupua holds his grandson Marcus Jose Miranda-Carpenter, 2, as he tosses toy cars down the slide at their apartment's playground.

# Anti-theft bollards adorn Union Square

By Rachel Swan  
STAFF WRITER

Walk up San Francisco's Grant Avenue, and you may see festive poinsettias or nutcracker dolls in the

window displays, or perhaps a mannequin gripping a couture handbag.

But there's a different sort of ornamentation on the blocks around Union Square. Rows of 3,000-

pound balls line the curbs, each affixed to a podium that resembles the base of a Greek column. They look like boulders made of pre-cast concrete, or those stones people lift for sport

in the Scottish Highlands. An art critic would marvel at the neoclassical style, or wince at the in-your-face bulk.

The fixtures have a clear

*Bollards continues on A9*

# Piece of Placer County history that nobody hears

By Lucy Hodgman  
STAFF WRITER

Behind a locked door at the El Dorado County fairgrounds, a pipe organ is the size of a studio apartment is collecting dust — and causing headaches for local officials.

Once the centerpiece of a local church here in Placerville, the organ is among two surviving instruments in California made by Swedish craftsman John Bergstrom. But since the church was razed in the late 1950s, it's languished in the fairground's musty "organ room," a mostly empty warehouse with ceilings vaulted high enough to hold the 22-foot-tall in-

strument.

While the other California Bergstrom organ was recently restored and moved to a winery, this one hasn't been so lucky.

Officials have spent more than a decade trying to find a new home for the historic instrument, which is one of dozens of organs across the country that churches and communities are struggling to give away or restore. The county estimates it would cost around \$200,000 to restore — and an additional \$30,000 to relocate.

"It's a shame," said fair CEO Kathy Dunkak. "It's a piece of history, but nobody sees it because it's locked up in a

*Organ continues on A11*



Brian L. Frank/For the S.F. Chronicle

Jacuzzi Family Vineyards owner Nancy Cline headed up a restoration project of an 1897 pipe organ, now housed in the winery's barrel room. Another John Bergstrom-made organ, in Placer County, needs a new home.

# Promise to clean up streets sees split results

Many residents tout Lurie's efforts; others note minimal improvement

By Lucy Hodgman and J.D. Morris  
STAFF WRITERS

Erika Slovikoski used to love "stoop-sitting" with friends in San Francisco's Mission District, where she has lived for the past three decades.

Sometime after the start of the pandemic, the party relocated from her front steps to her friend's enclosed backyard to escape rising street refuse, open-air drug use and an encampment that has waxed and waned for years across the street.

But the 57-year-old said she has felt new optimism since the beginning of this year, when she started seeing Mayor Daniel Lurie's social media videos engaging with constituents in similarly troubled neighborhoods. Lurie's vows to swiftly reduce drug scenes and homelessness were a pillar of his mayoral bid and a centerpiece of his first year at City Hall.

"I didn't expect to be such a fan of his," said Slovikoski, who did not support Lurie in the election last year but has been won over by him now.

"I'm kind of in love with him," she said.

Almost a year into Lurie's term, some residents of neighborhoods strained by drug use and homelessness say he's on track to deliver the safer, cleaner streets he promised — as Slovikoski believes. Others say the city-

*Streets continues on A11*

# Marina Safeway housing plan wins union OKs

By Laura Waxmann  
STAFF WRITER

The developer behind the controversial Marina Safeway redevelopment plan has locked in a key partnership with San Francisco construction unions, a crucial step in advancing its plan for a 25-story building with close to 800 new homes amid fierce neighborhood and City Hall pushback.

Developer Align Real Estate's deal with the building trades groups, required under a state law that streamlines approvals for these types of projects, could make it trickier for the political opposition, which includes Mayor Daniel Lurie and the Marina's supervisor, Stephen Sherrill, as well as neighborhood activists.

The San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council and the NorCal Carpenters Union this week confirmed their involvement with the plan — partnerships that are required under California's Assembly Bill 2011. The state law makes it easier to get approval for housing on commercial sites but imposes strict labor and environmental standards.

*Housing continues on A9*

