

Delancey Street Project builds chic screening room

by **Terry Strauss**

One thing you can be sure of, if the Delancey Street Project moves into your neighborhood, they're going to have something to contribute. In its two present locations in Pacific Heights and in the Richmond, this has included property improvements, crime patrols and escort and transportation services for the elderly and handicapped. Currently, it's putting the final touches on a plush, high-tech screening room that is part of a new \$30 million complex in a South of Market neighborhood shared by filmmakers, production companies, equipment houses and facilities.

Delancey Street is a nonprofit rehabilitation and residential organization headed by Mimi Silbert. Construction on its new home, a magnificent replica of a Mediterranean village located where Brannan, Embarcadero and First Street join, began more than five years ago, and has involved the talents of nearly 250 Delancey Street members. There are hand-hewn flower boxes, tile roofs and etched glass windows on the outside; the inner courtyards are adorned with fountains and tile patios. The complex is a labor of love for the community of ex-felons and former drug addicts literally building a new life for themselves.

The screening room will be unlike other well-established screening facilities in the city. First, it is larger than most, seating 150 people. It not only has 16mm and 35mm projection, but JBL large-screen video projection and THX-certified Dolby sound.

Aside from its technical features, the theater itself, like everything else at the complex, is elegant down to the smallest details. There is deep mahogany wainscoting on the walls, rich red carpeting and burgundy curtains. The sound panels are covered with murals depicting scenes of the



The Delancey Street Project's new \$30 million home.

city and a soaring bird: a symbol of importance to the residents. Screenings and special presentations held in the theater will also benefit from adjoining catering facilities, a restaurant, an espresso bar and a large room with a fireplace.

The screening room will show training, educational, documentary and feature films to residents, Silbert says. As of this spring, it will also be available to the public for press screenings, audience testing and dailies. There will be a sliding fee scale applied to benefit sponsors and independents, with all rentals benefiting Delancey Street, which in not only supported by the many businesses it runs but utilizes them to train residents for productive lives.

As I toured the still unfinished complex and screening room, in awe of the magnificent craftsmanship, Dugald Stermer, an illustrator and friend of Delancey said to me: "You know, people will be impressed that Delancey Street could pull this off at all. It's like when you hear about a dancing bear, you're just amazed the bear can dance, you don't think about how well it dances. Well in this case, the bear's Pavlova."

Indeed.

For more information about the Delancey Street screening room, call (415) 512-5151