

Off-sale liquor store owners suffer setback by city snafu

Letters announcing information meetings never got mailed

BY TOM CARTER

AN official city letter failed to reach more than 800 off-sale liquor license owners, so only 15 of them attended classes on the nuisance standards imposed on them by an ordinance designed to clean up troublesome neighborhoods.

"Only 13 to 15 have attended these classes," Assistant City Attorney Neli Palma said in a report on the ordinance to a Safety Forum Dec. 12 at Tenderloin Police Station. "It's sad. We are renting rooms at Bill Graham Auditorium and no one attends."

The ordinance by Supervisor Sophie Maxwell was passed in March. It creates a "deemed approved" status for all stores with off-sale licenses, subjecting them to fines and license suspensions if they don't comply with the ordinance. Maxwell was trying to clean up gritty liquor and grocery store scenes in the Tenderloin, Bayview-Hunters Point and the Mission that attract dope dealers, prostitutes and bums, she said. TL has 62 off-sale liquor licenses.

The city scheduled 20 informational meetings in September, October and November to explain the background, purpose, requirements and penalties for noncompliance, and to answer

questions. On Sept. 7, the Department of Public Health ostensibly sent the owners letters with the dates and times.

"There is limited space as the room holds between 50-100 people," the letter said. "Please be advised that if the room fills to capacity that you may be asked to wait until the next meeting."

But that letter wasn't mailed.

And before the mistake was discovered, representatives from Maxwell's office, the city attorney's office, the Police Department and DPH who attended the meetings sat idle. No meetings were canceled.

"We messed up," Virginia Smyly, the DPH director of Community Programs, who handles the ordinance's outreach, told *The Extra*. "And it will be reflected in our report to the Board of Supervisors. We're new at this and we dropped the ball. So we had to pick it up, dust it off and set new dates."

The city sent liquor license owners three letters. The first was from the Tax Collector's office that explained the ordinance's standards and contained an invoice for the mandatory \$240 fee. The second letter, from DPH, had the informational meeting dates. The third rectified the second by adding new dates in December because letter No. 2 was never sent.

"Something happened between

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TL hookup a challenge

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Loud complaints over late-night noise

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Russian American Valery Moreyno encourages his wife, Lubov, who is blind, to stand and deliver.

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

CLASSES FOR ACTIVISTS



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Director Anh Le exhorts seniors to speak up and empower themselves for their own good.

Training seniors to be grassroots guerrillas

BY TOM CARTER

This is the first of a two-part series about Senior University, which teaches the elderly and disabled how to voice their concerns and become neighborhood activists. Several thousand seniors are graduates of this program operated by the nonprofit Senior Action Network since 1994. Their voices have been heard from City Hall to Sacramento to Washington. Part I covers community organizing, public speaking, conducting meetings, direct action and lobbying.

MARIA Renteria said she didn't speak good English but, yes, she did have a story to tell the more than 40 seniors who had just finished lunch in the dining room at Dorothy Day Community. It was midway through Session I of Senior University, the first of four days over four weeks, a free course in community organizing.

The moderator asked Renteria to stand and speak. Tell it like she was testifying at City Hall, he prodded. He asked for help. David Santos Cortes, a native of Nicaragua and a retired San Francisco City College Spanish instructor, volunteered to interpret. He came to Renteria's side. The smartly dressed woman in her 60s stood and, through Cortes, calmly said:

"I'd like the sidewalks in my neighborhood to be fixed. I fell down once. Repair the holes in the sidewalk."

"*Muchas gracias*," said the beaming moderator Anh Le, who was concluding the Public Speaking segment of Senior U.

Renteria, a city resident since 1962, got a nice round of applause, having demonstrated the ingredients of a succinct advocacy message: She stated the problem, explained how it affected her and offered a solution. Also, in a more subtle lesson on empowerment, she had gotten help in a team effort and had been roundly supported by her peers.

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GOOD NEWS for...

PRESERVATIONISTS The Tenderloin Façade Improvement Program and the Roxie Film Center were among 25 recipients of 2006 Partners in Preservation awards from American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Part of a nationwide \$10 million, five-year initiative, this year's awards were given to Bay Area historic and cultural landmarks and historic preservation programs. The facade program, operated by TNDC and funded by the Mayor's Office of Community Development, gives building owners grants to restore and upgrade their properties. Since it began in 1999, the program has awarded \$76,000 to restore 11 neon signs, and \$160,000 to improve 18 façades. The Roxie Film Center on 16th Street off Valencia, built just after the 1906 earthquake, is the city's oldest operating movie theater and one of the few remaining single-screen cinemas. The Façade Improvement Program and the Roxie were among the 12 second-tier winners of the preservation awards, each receiving \$5,000. Thirteen other major Bay Area preservation sites, such as Angel Island Immigration Station and the Haas Lilienthal House, split a larger award pot of \$1 million.

SOMA PARK Bathrooms will be installed at the new Victoria Manalo Draves Park in the spring, according to the Department of Public Works, a relief for everyone and a boon for Bessie Carmichael Elementary kids who will then be using the park for exercise. "We're still working on details," said Project Manager Rick Thall. "But spring is the time they'll be in place." Restrooms were in the master plan but were eliminated by Mayor Newsom when he was preparing the city budget. The \$400,000 to restore them, plus \$60,000 for a park coordinator, were part of the \$28 million that the supervisors' Budget and Finance Committee added to the mayor's budget in June. The two-acre park on Folsom between Sixth and Seventh streets cost \$3.7 million and is named for the Filipina 1948 Olympic diving champion from South of the Slot. The Grand Opening was Oct. 27. Draves Park has playing fields and grassy areas that won't be ready for recreation until the end of December but its benches, playground and a basketball court are ready and inviting. Until the restrooms are installed, parkgoers will have to cross busy Folsom Street to use the facilities at Gene Friend Recreation Center.

YOGA & YOU For body and soul, in the new year try free yoga at Mercy Housing's 111 Jones St. community room. The classes, says teacher Lindsay Wilson, can relax you, decrease stress, tone your body, improve circulation and give you a better night's sleep. No previous experience necessary to join the classes, which meet Mondays at 6:15 p.m. Upcoming dates: Jan. 8, Jan. 15, Jan. 22. Yoga mats provided or bring your own. "This is a great class for low-income residents, social workers and activists of District 6," says Wilson. "For now, the class is for women only. We held a vote and decided this at our first class in July. Subject to change. . . ." Information: lwilson@mercyhousing.org.

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

The real costs of 'free' wi-fi

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

As citywide wireless Internet access inches closer to reality, reps of the S.F. Department of Telecommunications and Information Services are out in the field, bringing the word and trolling for support — even in places like the Tenderloin, where, they admit, delivering free wi-fi to most residents will be a huge challenge.

Since 2004, Mayor Newsom has been touting free or inexpensive wi-fi as a way to bridge the digital divide. Turns out the cyberbridge may cost individuals as much as \$23 a month — a big bite for people on fixed incomes who may skip meals to make ends meet.

"Our TechConnect initiative found that 70% of lower-income San Franciscans lacked Internet access in their homes," Emily Tseng, TechConnect project manager, told the November Tenderloin Futures Collaborative. "That's a larger disparity than in any other city. But we have to try to include them, because it closes other divides — economic, educational, health care."

The plan, as now conceived, is for Earthlink to operate the citywide network, installing about 1,500 radio transmitters on light poles across the city. Then Google will buy bandwidth from Earthlink and offer the free wireless services. The freebie connections will be glacial by modern standards — just a little faster than dial-up services — but anyone can pay Earthlink or other Internet providers \$21 to \$23 a month to bump up the connection to DSL speed. That's where the optimistic, free wireless plan goes haywire.

"The problems we anticipate are inside apartments and above the third floors of buildings," Tseng told Collaborative members, the very places where most of them work and live. "Here in the Tenderloin and in Chinatown are real concerns. If the light pole transmitter doesn't reach you, there are things you can stick in your window, but they'd come with the paid monthly service — they're not free."

Tseng later explained to The Extra that these CPEs (customer premises equipment) pull in the signal much like old TV antennas and, generally, are placed near a window. They come in many shapes and "strengths," she said, retailing for \$50 to \$100, but Earthlink will toss them in with the paid package.

TNDC's Jerry Jai said he was concerned about TechConnect's strategies. "It seems like the city will be making Internet service more accessible to those who already have it, not to those who don't. It also would help if funding were available to help developers," he said, referring to wiring new buildings or those being renovated for wireless access.

"I think there may be tax credits," Tseng said, "but I'll check and get back to you."

Central YMCA Director Carmela Gold said that the Y had to put in a T1 line, a high-speed digital network that comes into a building on fiber optic cable or copper and can be shared by hundreds of computer-users at once.

"Would the city cover the costs

of putting in a line like that?" asked Gold, who soon will be involved in construction of a new Y. The answer: No.

Gold suggested that Tseng convene a meeting of Tenderloin developers and property owners who have similar questions.

"We'd be interested," said Daniel O'Connor, St. Anthony's community liaison. "St. Anthony's and Salvation Army both have computer programs and have new buildings going up. It would be good to know what we can do now, while they're under construction."

Tseng agreed it was a good idea.

"I suggest you set up a specific meeting for the Tenderloin," said entrepreneur and city Entertainment Commission member Terrance Alan. "Tell people: 'Come to hear what we're doing and tell us what you need.' You're the city department in charge of this plan and it's an opportunity to do it right."

In early December, Tseng told The Extra there wasn't much practical assistance that her department could provide owners.

"We're pushing to get wi-fi off the ground first, though we could give some basic advice, such as bringing a CAT-5 wire into their buildings," she said.

CAT-5, according to Webopedia, is short for Category 5 network cabling, twisted pairs of copper wires that can carry high-speed connections.

Tseng said the supes will start hearings on contract negotiations between the city and Earthlink and Google early in the year that will last into late spring. Once the contract is okayed, a test of the system will start a couple of months later.

"It's planned as a pilot," she said. "We'll begin with transmitters in a five-mile-square area — we haven't chosen the area yet — and then the phased-in development of the whole system will take another year and a half."

INFUSION OF JOBS

Coming in 2007 to your neighborhood: Infusion Lounge, a bar so chic that it will have a dress code — no tennis shoes or white T-shirts without sportcoats.

Christopher Rosas, president of C-Two Hotels, which is building the bar, and Scott Caroen, project coordinator, presented plans for

their latest la-di-da watering hole, scheduled to open in early summer in the Hotel Fusion, 140 Ellis, formerly the Gates Hotel.

C-Two also owns the York Hotel at 940 Sutter, home of the Empire Plush Room, a speakeasy in the 1920s; Stratford on the Square at 242 Powell, with its Tea Room and Gallery; Andante at 610 Geary; Hotel Mark Twain, 345 Taylor; and the La Luna Inn, a motel on Chestnut Street in the Marina District.

"This lounge is upscale," said Caroen, "and it's for an upscale, older demographic, with lots of tourist traffic." The dress code will help keep the "kids" away, he added.

The owners are going after a type 47 liquor license, Caroen said, for a full bar and restaurant, and it will be a transfer from another location, not a new license.

In February, The Extra reported that of the city's total 3,461 liquor licenses, 671 were type 47. Following a 1999 moratorium on off-sale licenses in the Tenderloin, the Alcoholic Beverage Control office also stopped accepting applications for new type 47s because of oversaturation in the neighborhood.

No one at the Collaborative meeting balked at the license, but questions brought the enthusiastic presenters back to earth.

"What outreach to the community do you have planned to benefit the people who live here?" asked Alan.

"We don't have any plans yet," answered Rosas. "That's why we're coming to meetings like this in the community. What would you like us to do?"

Alan shot back, "We want you to hire 50% of your employees from the Tenderloin."

"That's doable," said Rosas. "We're nonunion."

In a Nov. 8 e-mail to Alliance for a Better District 6, subject line "Community Support," Caroen confirmed that he and Rosas had agreed to draft a letter about the 50% hire, and was "hoping" for project support.

A month later, Caroen told The Extra that the license transfer request was ready to go to ABC and that so far, no protests had been logged. Also on tap for him was a meeting with new TL police Capt. Gary Jimenez, he said. ■



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New TL police captain a short-timer

BY TOM CARTER

OFFICERS on the foot patrols that started in the Tenderloin on Nov. 24 may resort to bicycles for better mobility, according to the new but likely temporary TL station commander, Capt. Gary Jimenez.

Two two-officer teams are working the day watch: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Ellis Street from Market to Hyde, plus side streets. The two teams working the swing watch, 3 p.m. to 1 a.m., ply Market Street from Hyde to Powell, including McAllister, Golden Gate, Turk and Eddy.

"By regulation, foot patrols must be in uniforms, but the most effective officers are the plainclothes police," he said.

In November, Jimenez replaced Capt. Kathryn Brown who was on the job less than three years. She now heads Homeland Security and Youth Services for the department, Jimenez said. Brown, who requested the TL post, had served on the TL Task Force in the 1990s and claimed it was where, as a sergeant, she learned to be a good cop.

Jimenez came from Park Station, where he made captain. He says he is temporary.

"I asked for new business cards but they told me to hold off on that," he said. In the TL Station's community newsletter, he said the next community forum would be Jan. 30, "if I am still here."

"But I'm giving 150%," Jimenez said. "I'm confident I'll remain through the end of the year."

Jimenez joined the SFPD in 1970 when Joe Alioto was mayor. He was a sergeant at Central Station covering the Tenderloin 1989-90. For two more years he was on the Task Force stationed at the Hibernia Bank at 1 Jones St.

In 1990, then-Sgt. Jimenez was taking a man arrested for cocaine possession to jail in his squad car when the handcuffed man broke out of the back seat and ran into the Dalt Residence on Turk Street. Jimenez pursued him inside and, as the man was running upstairs, Jimenez shot him twice in the back.

Jimenez was quoted in an Examiner story five years later saying he thought the man might have been armed and was going upstairs where he thought elderly tenants would be in danger.

As the wounded man collapsed on the third floor, Jimenez said the perpetrator cracked to him, "Thank you very much. You just made me a lot of money."

The man recovered and the city settled his lawsuit for \$35,000. Jimenez, cleared in the shooting, was reprimanded for not securing the man in the car.

"The use of lethal force is probably one of the hardest aspects of our job because it's not always clear-cut," Jimenez was quoted in the Examiner. "I don't think any of us want to hurt somebody."

Jimenez has already tried to make a major change in the neighborhood. He requested a fulltime officer at U.N. Plaza, which he describes as a one-stop shopping center for drugs and stolen goods. It meant overtime and headquarters refused, citing budgetary reasons. Even so, U.N. Plaza is getting heightened attention.

"Our night watch patrol hits it four times between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.," he said. "BART (police) will start walking it, a park ranger, Marcus Santiago, is there now and today (Dec. 20) the Federal Protection Services will start a foot patrol there."

Compared with 15 years ago, he said, the Tenderloin has changed for the better and attributed that to Care Not Cash, the mayor's program to house the homeless. He guessed there are only half the number of homeless people on the streets now.

"It's a great improvement," he said. "but the crime is worse."

Like his predecessor Capt. Brown, Jimenez talked as if police were making arrests as fast as they can but can't staunch the flow of drug dealers.

"We arrested 355 drug dealers, buyers and users in October and 367 in November," Jimenez told an Alliance for a Better District 6-sponsored Safety Forum attended by about 50 people at the police station. "We are addressing this constantly on every street and every corner."

But some sophisticated sellers use text messaging and know when the police are coming, he said. "Because they're greedy they'll sell to anyone and they'll sell to us (plainclothes)," Jimenez said. "It's still

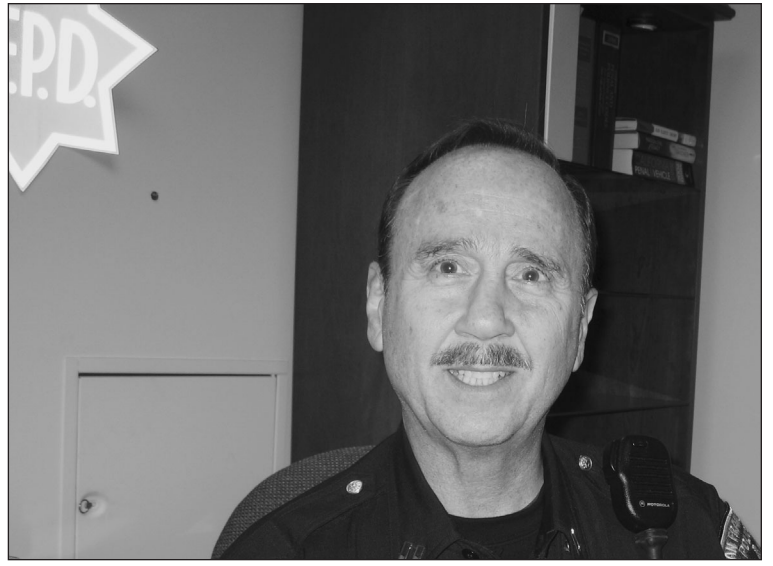


PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

TL station commander Capt. Gary Jimenez.

very lucrative, and as soon as we arrest one, two others are there to take their place."

Many of the drug dealers among the 722 cases sent to the district attorney go to drug diversion programs meant for addicts, Jimenez said, "an expedient way to deal with caseloads." The DA needs a bigger budget to resolve the issue, he said. "The solution can't come from the SFPD."

Jimenez was asked about a number of quality of life issues caused by street people, but he said police can only detain people to talk to them and can only frisk them if "there's probable cause." Officers are doing very little about the dangers of skateboarders and bicyclists on sidewalks, he said, and admitted he was almost clocked by a skateboarder that week. But it's an item of low priority, he indicated.

At the end of the meeting, Dina Hilliard was introduced as the new Safety Network community organizer. The Alliance also gave recognition awards to Deputy City Attorney Neli Palma for her work in code enforcement, Francis and Chi Ying Poon Cheung, who have run a convenience store at Hyde and Turk streets since 1989, and activist apartment manager Jim Thompson for his many contributions to the neighborhood. ■

No one knew about snafu till too late

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our office and the Tax Collector's office," said Smyly, "and the letters were never sent." When no one showed up at the 90-minute meetings that ran all day on Sept. 20 and Oct. 2, the snafu was discovered and letter No. 3 was sent the third week in October. It offered eight meetings over two additional days in December. That letter, too, had glitches.

"We got the list (of off-sale license holders) from the state Alcoholic Beverage Control department and it was four months old," Smyly said. The majority of license holders were notified, she estimated, but some owners weren't reached at their place of business and others, she surmised, misplaced or ignored the mail.

"We got a lot of calls," she said. "Some were anonymous. And some said they no longer used their license."

"Where we held the meetings was downtown, too. These are small business owners and maybe they couldn't get away during the day. We screwed up. We didn't know what we were doing, and we need to find the best way to communicate with them."

After the police station meeting, Palma said a small group of Arab American grocers came to the Nov. 15 meeting. "But usually at other meetings it was just one or two (owners)," she said. "Sometimes no one showed up. I have no idea why. And people just sat around waiting."

The cost of the ordinance's administration, including \$111,000 for education and public outreach, is to be covered by the \$240 annual fee. But there are also hidden time and material costs for all departments, according to Smyly. A member of the seven-member Oakland team that oversees a similar ordinance there told The Extra 10 months ago that San Francisco's ordinance was "way underfunded." Oakland charges its 400 license

holders a \$1,500 fee.

The San Francisco legislation largely duplicates state and federal nuisance laws. It holds store owners responsible for keeping order inside their business and outside on the sidewalk, and allows no more than a third of the surface of windows and doors to be covered. What's new is the administrative structure that provides for noncompliance hearings if the standards are violated, and an appeal system. Penalties range from \$500 to \$1,000 and escalate to a license suspension.

Maxwell said the purpose of the ordinance is "to educate all of the liquor store owners on how to be good neighbors." The Youth Leadership Institute, a youth advocacy group with offices in San Francisco and San Rafael, came to Maxwell almost five years ago with a survey it had done on San Francisco liquor stores showing many violations. YLI works with communities to adopt standards to reduce liquor sales to minors and criminal activity. Maxwell's legislation grew from that relationship. DPH had been involved with one of YLI's grant projects and as Maxwell's bill grew, DPH got included, although more "education" was planned, but in the end not realized, Smyly said.

Maxwell called the ordinance a "hammer," if liquor store owners don't hew the line. With its passage, all businesses in San Francisco with off-sale licenses became "deemed approved," the status a business keeps as long as it complies with the standards.

The main opposition to it came from the 425-member Arab American Grocers Association. The group didn't like that a store owner, after two non-compliance violations, could be prohibited from selling alcohol, tantamount to losing the license. The ABC revokes a license after three violations. The association also opposed the ordinance because any violations remain with the business even after it's sold. Dissenting Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi called

this condition "a pox on the property," affecting its sale value.

"Poison covered with sugar," is how Arab American Grocers President Kamel Karagah described Maxwell's measure after it passed.

Asked if any Arab American grocers might have shunned the informational meetings for spite, Jimmy Shamieh, the association's vice president, said no.

"The association opposed the measure," Shamieh said at his new California Grocery location at 123 Eddy St. "But it passed and we intend to fully comply with every part of it. We want our members to come to meetings and get their questions answered."

He blamed the paltry attendance on the communications snafu and said different scheduling could have attracted owners who were "inconvenienced" by daytime meetings.

Shamieh attended a Nov. 15 meeting, he said, after being notified by letter No. 3. But more than 800 store owners missed the opportunity they were entitled to under the legislation.

Every license holder who pays the fee deserves "a-face-to-face" explanation of the measure but the DPH budget for outreach couldn't afford that, Smyly told The Extra last February. "We suggested group meetings in neighborhoods as a compromise," she said. But the final plan was to schedule meetings at Civic Auditorium.

Now that the informational meetings are complete, the departments involved will have a debriefing in January to thrash over what has happened, Smyly said. For information they would have gotten, liquor store owners will have to wait for DPH and other representatives to attend monthly community meetings that are held by district police captains. Those assignments have yet to be made.

"I hope it gets worked out," Shamieh said. "Any assistance the association can give, we'd be glad to help and we'd work with other grocers' associations." ■

Classes for activists: Seniors le

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What Renteria didn't say was that her fall a year ago near her home on an uneven Cumberland Street sidewalk near Mission Dolores Park bothers her to this day. Her right shin is still badly discolored from the injury and pain continues to wake her at night. But those descriptive details will surface with practice.

Twenty-five percent of the Tenderloin's 29,155 population is age 55 or older, according to an Urban Solutions 2004 neighborhood report using 2000 census figures. The TL's four census tracts show that people 65 and older, who number 3,690, are 12.6% of the population. The majority live in the eastern part of the neighborhood, which has the highest density of SROs. But Senior Action Network liberally defines a senior as 50 or over and invites disabled folks of any age to Senior University.

The seniors are issued a fat binder explaining the subjects to be covered, questions that will be posed, plus answers, and brief bios and contact lists of local, state and federal elected officials. Class materials have been evolving since 1994 when the university started here at Dorothy Day. Now the courses are offered four times a year in

alive.

The ethnic mix of seniors was extraordinary: Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, Russians, Italians, Japanese, Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans as well as U.S.-born from other states. Most live in the Tenderloin, South of Market, the Mission and the Sunset.

Ages ranged from late 40s to early 90s (a 92-year-old Bayview-Hunters Point woman was volunteering in the kitchen). Women outnumbered men 7 to 1. A half dozen had wheelchairs or walkers.

"Think inside yourself," David Grant, SAN's executive director, challenged them at the outset. "There is this power within you to tell people what you are thinking. Use that power. Make yourselves heard and make things happen. Otherwise, the bus goes right by and doesn't stop.

"We're all different," Grant continued. "but we all share our common agenda. It will seem scary to some of you — standing in front of the group (to give a speech). But the purpose is to send you out the door and down the street to City Hall, so you can speak in public about your concerns."

To begin, everyone in the room told their name, where they came from and how long they had been in

the city. Some struggled with English.

Others — especially the oldest — spoke too faintly to be heard.

The physically disabled sat at the far end of the table and after introductions became the most vocal participants. An exception was a nondisabled Italian man, Angelo, who piped up on just about everything. Maybe 1 in 5 spoke without prodding. Most were unused to speaking publicly and some had cultural barriers.

Asked why he hadn't spoken, one elderly Chinese man explained to this reporter that his voice quavered badly when he tried to speak to groups. "And where I come from," he added, "if you said the wrong thing you got your head lopped off."

In one exercise, the seniors identified major areas of concern such as affordable housing and transportation. But it was pedestrian safety that got the most attention. Braving potholes and jagged pavement and dodging "bicycle Nazis and skateboarders," said one South of Market senior, makes going from "point A to point B" dangerous.

"I won't run errands because it's like a video game to avoid things out there," said Jacquie Bryson, who lives at Folsom and Dore streets and said she is a Mills College graduate who studied counseling at Stanford University. Her response to the moderator's plea for ideas for solutions: "lawsuits!"

Formerly homeless, Bryson has problems with her legs and uses a walker or cane. At the District 6 Town Meeting in October 2005, she challenged Mohammed Nuru of the Department of Public Works to address the "terrible" condition of streets and sidewalks in western SoMa. A few days later, with the aid of her walker, she said she escorted him on a tour between Ninth and 11th streets from Howard to Folsom. She said he took notes and pictures.

But nothing happened. Months later his office called her. "They asked me for addresses and I said Mohammed had them," Bryson told The Extra at the break. Now, with no improvements, she is so frustrated she wants to sue the city.

Yoko Takahashi, sitting next to her, had a reminder of the city's pothole perils. She rolled up her left sleeve to show ugly scarring around the elbow. A year ago, she was on her way to Rainbow Grocery and fell at the corner of 13th and Folsom. "Uneven pavement" caused it, she said, "and chunks missing." She remembers cars honking for her to get up and out of the street.

A week later, Session II addressed Lobbying, and attendance held firm at Dorothy Day. SAN, drawing from its membership of 3,000 and its Senior University graduates, has been a familiar presence at City Hall and in Sacramento. Last year it took a group to protest the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan and held rallies outside the San Francisco offices of U.S. Sens. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

"I became more aware of what I could do," Jack Harmon said months after the rallies. A 2005 Sr. U. graduate, he lives in the 400 block of Turk Street. "And I learned to say it in a few words."

The truth about lobbying, Shirley Bierly was saying to the group, is that when you and your support team have got your message down pat — and the bureaucrat or elected official you see consents to champion your cause — you still can't take it to the bank.

Bierly, a veteran of decades of lobbying, learned from her pioneering activist mother and is the unofficial dean of Senior University and knows the cruel reality.

"They'll say yes to your face and make you a promise," she said, "and then when the vote comes, they'll vote no. It happens."

To keep promises on track: "Get it in writing."

Bierly was the warmup speaker for Lobbying with the remaining sessions to focus on Leadership, Diversity and Public Speaking. This was Day 1. Before they graduate during Session 4, the seniors are to stand in front of the group and deliver three-minute speeches.

Bierly is quick with words but short on volume. She started speaking at one end of the room, inched forward and ended up talking to a third of the room where the vocal participants sit. Behind her, with no chance of hearing, were five quiet Vietnamese ladies and a dozen others.

"I'm deaf and can't hear," Minnie Fry, a grandmotherly woman resembling the image of candymaker Mary See, said loudly to her neighbor. The man on her other side said, "She needs a loudspeaker."

Bierly continued to seek definitions of lobbying.

"It's the ability to connect with the movers and shakers," said Ed Evans from his wheelchair. The question "How do you do it?" got a variety of answers, including personal appearances with politicians, phone calls, e-mails, even political contributions.

"Having a group is the best way to go to make an impression," Bierly said.

Someone suggested a tape recorder could work better for documenting a politician's commitment than a signed paper.

"No way," said Bierly. "They wouldn't let you past the front door with it."

The height of the lobbying session was the mock confrontation through role-playing. And to set that up, Le, the gregarious director of Senior University, introduced melodramatically like a tuxedoed announcer bringing out a heavyweight contender, Tommi Aviccolli Mecca, a housing rights



Pretend Mayor Jacquie Bryson (left) and Ava Handy Beckham loved the role playing.

neighborhoods with high senior and disabled populations.

Seniors who pick up the gauntlet become community activists. Some at the session already have experience under their belts. But whatever it is about the program — the focus on their empowerment, the coziness of a peer group, the gregarious, charismatic director and organizer Anh Le, or just the free lunch — the seniors keep coming back. A third are repeaters; a few are taking the course for the third or fourth time.

In Dorothy Day's tidy, main floor dining room, tables were arranged in a horseshoe with chairs around them, the open end reserved for the speakers. The seniors' anticipation was palpable as they paused at 9:30 a.m. at a hospitality table with coffee, juice and cookies before finding a seat.

The event focused on seniors and their needs. It championed their causes and celebrated their voices. The goal was to learn how to get stronger, personally and collectively. Le greeted everyone enthusiastically as they arrived. Outside, the sun peeked through cloud cover and the weather was pleasantly cool. It was a good day to be

learn to be grassroots guerrillas

activist.

Mecca has a voice that could reach to the other end of the room from the stage where he stood.

"How do we organize to lobby?" he asked, and turned to write the flow of responses on butcher paper on the wall. Several seniors had taken this course before and were among the emboldened. The room came alive with energy.

"Select a leader, form committees," they yell out. "State the problem," an Italian man pipes up. "Make a slogan," offers a Mexican man. "Have an agenda," an African American man says.

"These are all great ideas," Mecca said, as momentum built.

He took the seniors through determining their issue (broken sidewalks), the persons to be lobbied (a vote decides that it's the mayor), and who will speak for the seniors (self-nominating volunteers).

One man wanted to reverse the process. "I can't agree with you," he said. "I trust Chris Daly. He does me right. I live in his district. I'd go with him."

But it was too late.

"We've already voted," said Mecca, "and the problem is bigger than the district."

He encouraged anyone who hadn't spoken to put in their two cents. Le stepped in to call on some by name. John Michael Barquera, who lives at Dorothy Day, wanted to be assistant to the play-acting mayor Jacquie Bryson, the voluble SoMa resident who has had her problems with sidewalks. The group consented.

Someone said the mayor deals with bigger issues than this. But Mecca said no matter, we'll chance it because he's a public official, responsible to the citizenry.

Ava Handy Beckham, who lives at the Madonna Senior Residence on Golden Gate Avenue, started the dialogue as a member of the committee visiting the mayor.

"I'm handicapped," she said. She's in a wheelchair. "I represent Senior University and my complaint today is broken sidewalks. They are a hazard to older people and people in wheelchairs and to the blind and the lame. We're asking your cooperation. I know people who are falling down."

"I'd like to hear from other members of your group," "Mayor" Bryson said.

Three others spoke. One said fixing the sidewalks would be cheaper for the city than paying off lawsuits that could ensue from sidewalk accidents. Moreover, another said in a rambling discourse, uneven sidewalks scuff shoes.

"Thank you," the mayor said. "I appreciate the issue of shiny shoes."

A couple of people snicker.

"I can't avoid these conditions," said Yoko Takahashi, "and I fell flat on my face and was bleeding all over the place." She stood and rolled up her sleeve to show the mayor, sitting two seats away, the scars on her forearm from her accident. "This is a beautiful tourist city. And I am ashamed of it."

"I apologize that you hurt yourself," the mayor said.

"We agree the conditions are bad in the Tenderloin," the aide, Barquera, said. "But we have budget problems. We'll try to do our best."

The exercise that was created out of thin air had coalesced into a powerful, moving action. From it, the seniors felt a ripple of excitement that trumped the laughably disappointing responses from officialdom.

In the evaluation, the seniors liked Takahashi's scars, the tourist angle, the connection with the mayor ("he understands the problem now"), and said the amount of time the committee spent explaining the issue was good. But others disagreed and said the presentation was rambling and wordy. The work to be done needed a deadline, someone said.

But the key element was missing.

"A solution," Mecca says. "You don't go in just presenting problems. You offer solutions. You've got to have them. But the role playing was really good."

Le ran the next segment, How to Conduct an Effective Meeting, and right off the seniors agreed that where they were was about the best place imaginable.

"But you don't have a microphone," said Minnie Fry, the deaf lady. "Let's get one so everybody can hear what's going on."

Le apologized and said he had tried to get a microphone but couldn't. He spoke in a full voice. Everyone could hear him. He is well-liked and the seniors attribute the success of the sessions to him, although they've been going on since 1994 and he's been with the program less than two years.

He spoke to the Vietnamese women and got them participating while interpreting their suggestions. It satisfies Angelo, the egalitarian Italian, who for two sessions has been acutely aware of who is not saying



San Francisco-born Angelo D'Angelo (standing) was part of the vocal minority that drove the commentary.

anything and persistently asks, "Who is speaking for the Chinese and the Vietnamese people here?"

After a catered Thanksgiving lunch, about a dozen people left, missing the documentary "The Democratic Process: Saul Alinsky & His Legacy." Actor Alec Baldwin narrates the hourlong movie on the legendary community organizer of the mid-20th century. Alinsky led the movement to empower disenfranchised communities through collective action. His methods influenced the civil rights movement, the farm workers' struggle and the Vietnam War protests. They live on through the Industrial Area Foundation operating in a number of states — and through the spirit of Senior University and the other grassroots guerrilla trainings in San Francisco and elsewhere. ■

Next issue: Part II, a stunning university success and graduation

SoMa training for activists

THE South of Market Community Action Network trains community activists, too, in a four-month process during summer, and it pays participants a stipend.

The Resident Organizing and Leadership Development Program is a 10-week internship that has graduated 15 activists in the three years since it was established with a grant from San Francisco Foundation's Koshland Program. The training consists of some night classes on SRO tenant rights and community planning, among other topics, and an internship with organizations such as the Veterans Equity Center, Child Care Center, SOMCAN, Canon Kip and Oasis for Girls.

SOUTHSIDE

Five interns are paid \$1,200 each during the course, which is being revamped and will start in July, according to SOMCAN Executive Director April Veneracion. Interns are chosen from among 20 or so graduates of a prerequisite, introductory workshop on neighborhood organizing that meets for an hour or two once a week for four weeks. To apply, contact Angelica Cabande, 348-1945 or acabande@somcan.org.

"Most in the program are from SoMa but some come from out of the neighborhood," says Veneracion. "And some of the graduates have stayed permanently where they have interned." ■

—TOM CARTER



Anh Le eagerly identifies everyone and celebrates their contributions, including this Dorothy Day maintenance man who wandered in.

Tenderloin and its SROs — making of a historic district

Reviving bid to get neighborhood listed on National Register

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE Tenderloin is unique. "It has the largest number of historic SROs in the world," says Tenderloin Housing Clinic Director Randy Shaw, who plans to nominate a portion of the neighborhood for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as the Tenderloin Hotel and Apartment District.

"The listing will increase property values and pride in the neighborhood," he said. "It'll give owners financial incentives to improve their properties. I can't imagine any owners not supporting it."

The major perk is the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive — not a deduction but a straight federal tax credit equal to 20% of the rehabilitation cost.

The historic district boundaries would be the west side of Mason, the east side of Polk, O'Farrell Street and Golden Gate Avenue, 23 blocks containing more than 300 properties, many of them single-room occupancy hotels.

Shaw's project isn't new. He was part of an effort in the Eighties when a group of architectural preservationists tried to establish a historic district in the area bounded by Taylor, Turk, Larkin and Bush, 28 blocks plus irregular extensions into 24 adjoining blocks.

In their 130-page nomination application, Bay Area architectural historian Anne Bloomfield wrote that the San Francisco Apartment Hotel Historic District was "perhaps the country's only large, virtually intact, architecturally consistent densely packed inner-city residential area. For blockfront after blockfront the apartments and hotels march along at nearly even cornice lines, breasting similar windows and fire escapes above the sidewalk jumble of signs and storefronts, agreeing on the

form of dress and the vocabulary of ornament, justified by the great numbers and broad social mix of people they house."

The application inventoried 860 properties, and 86% of them "contributed" to San Francisco's architectural heritage, the surveyors said. Few were architectural stunners, but all had period details typical of early 20th century architecture — cornices, decorative spandrels, brick or galvanized iron facades, graceful metalwork, Art Deco ornamentation, marble entries. Their sheer numbers gave the area historical value and made each building worth preserving.

The city Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board approved the nomination and passed it on to the State Historical Landmarks Commission, whose approval was the penultimate step for a National Register listing.

But the timing was off, recalled Brad Paul, who in the early 1980s was director of NOMPC, the North of Market Planning Coalition, and part of a growing preservation community of property owners and nonprofits, including Shaw and the nascent Tenderloin Housing Clinic.

"We were in the middle of trying to get the city to rezone the Tenderloin," Paul said. "We asked the state commission to hold off its vote for six months or a year and, surprisingly, they agreed to wait. We weren't at all opposed to the historic district designation, just to the timing."

That rezoning petition — asking the city to drop the Tenderloin's 400-foot height limit to 80 feet to protect it from encroachment of high-rise hotels and office buildings — was filed by Realty House West, owner of the Cadillac Hotel, the friars who owned St. Boniface Church, and the Rev. Cecil Williams on behalf of Glide Memorial Methodist Church. The city took three years to approve the rezoning.

"We all were so busy that we just never got back to the commission — the ball got dropped," Paul said.

While the proposed historic district listing evaporated for the central and lower Tenderloin, its upper reaches, above Post, finally were listed on the National Register in 1991. Called the Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel District, it stretches roughly along Post from Jones to Polk, Sutter from Taylor to Polk, and Bush from Stockton to Larkin.

Then, in 1998, the Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force contacted Anne Bloomfield and asked what it might cost to revive the project to get the Tenderloin listed. She wrote back: \$6,000. Paul, then staff to the task force, doesn't recall the details, but believes the idea was probably one of several potential projects being floated and that members weren't fully behind it.

PROJECT RESURFACES

Shaw was a young housing activist when the '83 survey was being conducted, and he remembers how amazed and pleased everyone was when the state commission agreed to defer its vote.

"Without the new zoning in place, I think we were concerned that the district listing and financial incentives might lead to speculation in the Tenderloin," Shaw said. "I don't think any of us remembers exactly why we didn't go back to the state commission later on."

The idea for a historic district re-emerged last year, Shaw said. He and Sam Dodge, program director of the Central City SRO Collaborative, were talking about the idea of creating a museum in the Tenderloin similar to the Tenement Museum on New York's Lower



PHOTOS BY MARK ELLINGER
TNDC's Ambassador Hotel, 55 Mason, built in 1922 by architects Earl B. Scott and K. McDonald, features quoining at the corner, ornamental lintels over windows, block moldings supporting the deeply projecting cornice, and horizontal belt courses, moldings that separate sections of the building.

East Side, carefully restored apartments of five real immigrant families that lived in the building from the 1870s to the 1930s.

"We talked about tours of the Tenderloin, with plaques on buildings giving historical information," Shaw said.

In doing research, he rediscovered the historic district survey of '83. At the same time, his search for funds for historic tours led him to the city's Historic Preservation Fund Committee.

Two of its seven members are G.G. Platt, a staunch preservationist in a pro-development era, who was kicked off the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board in 1980, and Richard Hillis, director of the Mayor's Office of Economic Workforce Development, which monitors the \$2.5 million fund.

The largesse is from the settlement of a lawsuit that two preservation groups filed against the Redevelopment Agency and the developers of the new Westfield center. The suit claimed that in demolishing part of the

Emporium, they violated the California Environmental Quality Act and the Westfield project's final EIR. Westfield paid off, and the committee distributes grants of less than \$25,000 to preservation projects citywide, including surveys of structures with historic merit and nominations to local, state and federal historic registers.

"Since the notice of funding availability was posted in May, we've received a half-dozen proposals," Hillis said. "So far, only one has been funded, a \$25,000 request to start the application process for a Mission Dolores Historic District. The committee also has decided to give the Planning Department \$300,000 a year for three years to survey the entire city."

When Shaw approached the committee with the idea of tour funding, members sensed there were bigger fish to fry and encouraged him to apply for a grant to nominate the historic district.

THC is the lead sponsor in the nomination, but Shaw credits Platt and Hillis with paving

the way to get the project off the ground.

"They have been absolutely indispensable," Shaw said.

In late November, Shaw had several irons in the fire. He was drafting the funding proposal. He'd obtained the property owners' list from the North of Market Community Benefits District and was preparing a letter to them, touting the historic district's advantages. CBD Manager Elaine Zamora says her board supports the proposal. Shaw also is waiting to hear from the state Office of Historic Preservation.

"The 1983 survey is public information, so we know we can use what applies for the new survey, but we don't know if it can just be reactivated," he said. That means the scope of the work to be done is unknown.

"We don't know how much to request in the grant proposal until the state tells us what's involved, but it certainly will not be more than \$25,000," Shaw said.

Hillis thinks the nomination process will be smooth. "Things do seem to be aligned," he said. "But perhaps the real beauty of this is that the owners and activists who stopped this almost 25 years ago are now trying to make it happen. It works out great."

'THE TIME IS RIGHT'

Almost every one of the 300 properties in the proposed Tenderloin Hotel and Apartment District is already considered a historic resource, Shaw said, based on surveys conducted by the Junior League in its 1968 publication "Here Today," the S.F. Planning Department in 1976 and San Francisco Architectural Heritage in the early 1980s. In 1970, the Board of Supervisors officially adopted the League's historical findings on 2,500 S.F. properties, some of which are in the proposed district.

"For years, the property owners have had to meet historical code requirements but they've been getting none of the financial incentives," Shaw said.

The requirements come from the State Historical Building Code, established in 1979. Owners of historic buildings who want to rehab or restore them must include life-safety upgrades — for occupancy, egress, fire protection and more — plus retain historic materials and character, at least on the facade.

But unless the building is a designated city landmark or is listed on the National Register, owners get no financial perks.

If the Tenderloin buildings get listed, owners who fix up their properties can apply for the 20% federal tax credit, a program established in 1976 to reward and encourage preservation. To qualify, buildings have to be income-producing and rehabbed according to standards set by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The State Historical Building Code also gives owners of historic properties some flexibility because their aging buildings don't fit neatly into building codes designed for modern construction. Even a slight slackening of codes can translate into dollars in the owners' pockets.

Historic San Francisco districts, unlike individual properties listed on the National Register, currently aren't eligible for perhaps the biggest boon: the 1976 California Mills Act, which can reduce a historic building's property taxes by up to 50% if the owner agrees to maintain and preserve it for at least 10 years. The 10-year contract between the owner and the city can be transferred if the property is

sold, and it is automatically renewed for another 10 years if contract standards are met.

But the exclusion of districts may change soon, says Rachel Force, member of the Planning Department's historic resources survey team: "The Mills Act, as a state law, is dealt with differently by different localities. There's an effort being made [in S.F.] right now to expand the eligible properties to include contributors to city historic districts and National Register districts."

This is all good news to Shaw, who admits that his worries 25 years ago about speculation in the Tenderloin have almost vanished, primarily because nonprofit developers have become successful entrepreneurs, creating affordable housing for families and individuals.

"Things have stabilized," he said. "The time is right for the historic district." ■



Incised brick around the windows, foliage on a projecting molding above dentils and decorative metal grillwork on the fire escape define the Empress Hotel, 144 Eddy.

Getting listed on National Register

IF Shaw's nomination succeeds, the Tenderloin will become the city's 24th historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Notable others include the Civic Center, Telegraph Hill, Russian Hill, Alcatraz, and the Market Street Theatre and Loft District, added to the National Register in 1986. It comprises only 20 buildings — 982-1112 Market, 973-1105 Market, 1 Jones and 1-35 Taylor.

The Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the nation's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects worth preserving. The National Park Service, under the secretary of the Interior, administers the National Register. To be eligible, the nominee must be associated with significant people or events; be distinctive artistically or architecturally; or be able to yield important historical information. The register today has more than 80,000 listings.

Anyone can submit a nomination; the process starts with extensive documentation and submitting a list of all affected property owners to the state Office of Historic Preservation. San Francisco nominations are kicked back to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board for a hearing. Landmarks then sends it for approval to the state Historical Resources Commission; if the state approves, the nomination goes to the National Park Service and, finally, to the Keeper of the Register — currently Janet Mathews, also the Park Service associate director of cultural resources.

At least 30 days before the commission vote, the Office of Historic Preservation sends a mailing to property owners, posts a notice in local papers and holds informational meetings with owners. Those who object to the listing have to submit a notarized statement that becomes part of the nomination package commissioners vote on. Owners in a nominated district get one vote, regardless of the number of properties they own.

If 51% of the owners in a district object, the National Register listing is dead in the water. But if the Keeper determines that the district is eligible for national listing, despite owners' objections, the district automatically gets listed on the California Register of Historical Resources. Owners who want to alter their property in a historic district might face additional Planning Department reviews — to "protect" it as a historic resource. If the alterations are significant, they may even have to pay for an environmental impact report. ■

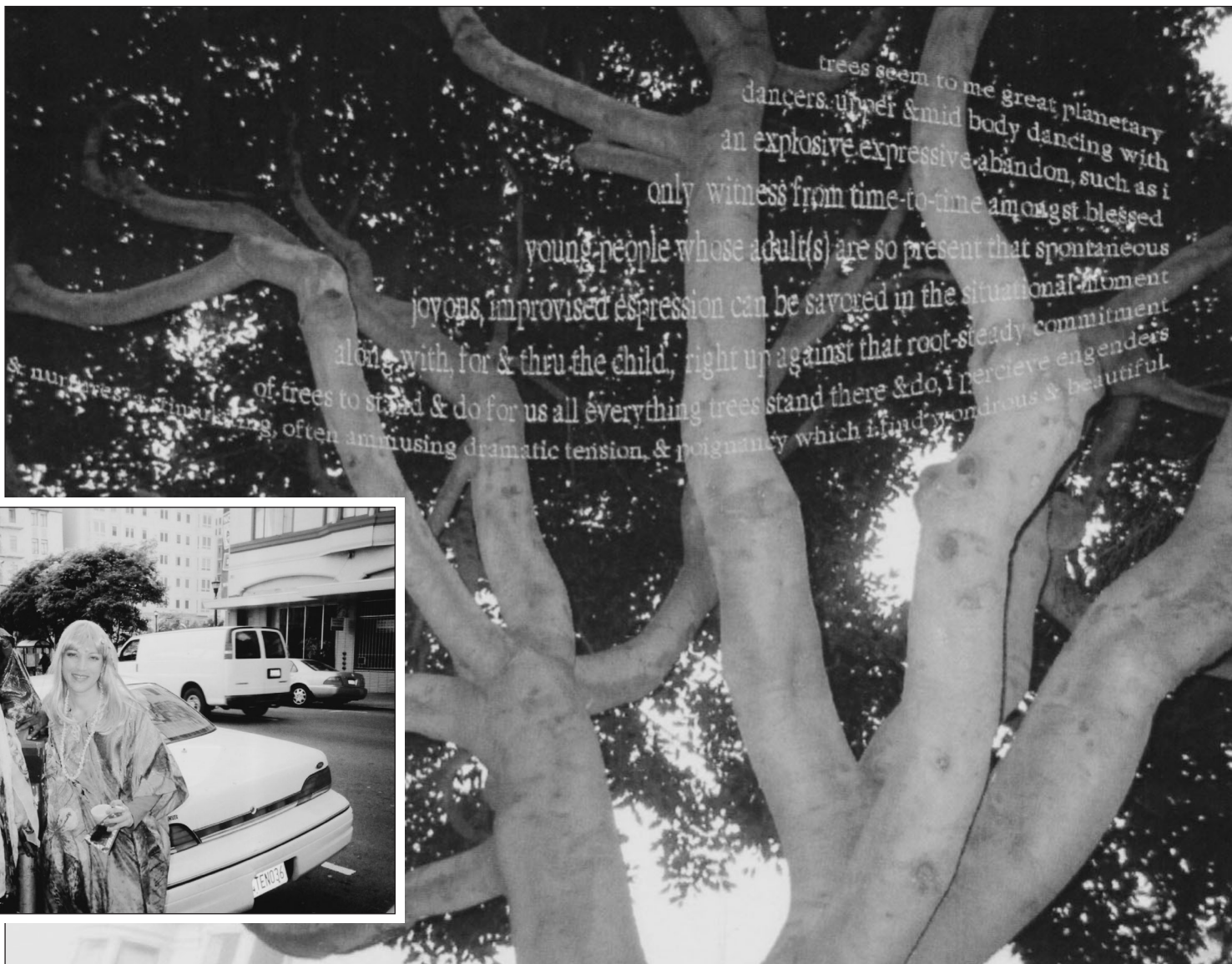
—MARJORIE BEGGS



Original Joe's on the left and the Hotel Warfield at 118 Taylor flank an apartment building with a triangular pediment and balusters on the parapet, rounded arches and decorative metal grillwork on the fire escape.



Under the wide projecting cornice of the Admiral Hotel, 608 O'Farrell, are garland reliefs, projecting cartouches above four of the windows, and a belt course that separates the top story.



Inset: Photographer Ramu Aki (left) and friend. **Above:** Aki photo of tree with words filtering through the limbs.

trees seem to me great planetary dancers under & mid body dancers with an explosive expressive abandon, such as I only witness from time-to-time amongst blessed young people whose adult(s) are so present that spontaneous joyous, improvised expression can be savored in the situational moment along with for & thru the child; right up against that root-steady commitment of trees to stand & do for all of us everything trees stand there & do, I perceive engenders & nurtures a stimulating, often amusing dramatic tension & poignancy which I find wondrous & beautiful

—RAMU AKI

Photog of the mundane, artist of the moment

BY ED BOWERS

ON display at the Faithful Fools Court Gallery is an exhibition of digital photography by photog/poet Ramu Aki that is unique, due not only to the intensity of the work, but also because of its innovative presentation.

This show is billed as a “progressive” exhibit. Over the course of its run the photographer will be adding images to his exhibit, causing his presentation to grow organically, much as the flowering of a plant.

The photos on display are not museum pieces as much as living, breathing parts of a continually changing whole. The viewer can see this show once, but probably not ever see it exactly the same way again.

This adventurous concept that Aki has added to the art of gallery exhibition I find

fascinating and much admire. It breathes life into what ordinarily would be regarded as a finished product, static and unchangeable; this progressive method piques curiosity and adds an open-ended quality to the normal presentation of art.

Anyone who lives in San Francisco should view this exhibit. Aki considers San Francisco to be the most beautiful city in the whole wide world and his photographs express that belief. They glow with vibrant colors, clear transparent images, and take in the length and breadth of what many refer to, ironically given current U.S. history, as Baghdad by the Bay.

The moment is alive only for a moment, as fast as the speed of light, possibly not even long enough to register by the conscious mind, so most of us remain trapped in the fading black and white images of the past. The photographs on display here are as close to any I have ever seen at capturing with clarity the explosion of a moment that will never be witnessed again, but on a deep level of awareness, remains eternally alive.

Many of the photographs are of inanimate objects that are taken for granted and seen daily on the street, of trees and mannequins and even graffiti written on concrete in vibrant green paint. But there is nothing inanimate about them. All have been transformed by the art of digital photography into creatures with personalities and souls.

There's an edginess about these photos of objects. It's almost as though a life is trapped inside them that could explode any second and escape. Aki expresses visually the philosophy of animism where anything that is, is alive. His walls breathe, trees stretch their

trunks to the azure sky and filter human words between their grasping limbs. Each photo addresses the viewer with a radiant individual life force.

As for the photographs of people, ranging from the civic-minded with smiles on their faces to dilapidated, prematurely old junkies sitting on the street sucking on cigarettes, each is revealed as containing the same vibrating beauty as a tree, a skyscraper or a wall.

Everything is equal in Aki's photographic memory. Everything is life. Everything is consciousness.

That's what I've always loved about San Francisco. In spite of its problems, it's so full of life. Most zones attempt to control and manipulate and drain the uncontrollable spirit out of its citizens for the sake of efficiency, productivity, commerce, and safety. But San Francisco cultivates a special relationship with this spirit that Mr. Aki has captured perfectly.

I would recommend to anyone feeling alone in a dead world to expose himself to the life revealed and released by these photographs. He might be transformed and renewed. These photographs have the ability to alter consciousness regarding habitual ways of seeing ordinary things in an extraordinary world.

And that's the real purpose behind all great art.

The photographs of Ramu Aki will be on exhibition indefinitely at The Faithful Fools Court at 234 Hyde St. If a transformational experience is what you are looking for then this is one show that you shouldn't miss.

Plus, this is the holiday season and these photographs are being sold right off the rack, and would make fabulous gifts. Their price is \$5 for a small photo and \$20 for a large. Ramu is making his art available to everyone.

So take advantage of this beautiful opportunity while it lasts. ■

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OBITUARIES

ROBERT CLARK Worked for Lockheed

In failing health, Robert Clark, a Lockheed sheet metal worker for 23 years, moved into the Civic Center Residence in March so he wouldn't be a burden to his family here in town, his friends said. He died in his seventh floor room on Dec. 5.

Mr. Clark had multiple medical problems, including advanced diabetes. He was 72.

"He was so polite he was almost courtly," social worker Barbara Fitzpatrick said at his Dec. 13 memorial at the hotel. "He was very well-liked but he was quiet and stayed in his room a lot."

It was difficult for Mr. Clark to walk. He preferred inching along with shuffling steps to using a wheelchair, which he "hated," according to his friend of a year, Johnny, who declined to give his last name. "It would take him forever to walk to the corner but he wouldn't touch his wheelchair."

The two spent hours sitting in the hotel conference room admiring the coffered ceilings and talking about architecture.

"He was an educated man," Johnny said. "And when I look up there now I think of him looking down at me. You can't say anything bad about that man."

Johnny said Mr. Clark was at the hotel to not be a "burden" to his family and that his

"beautiful wife and daughter" had come two days ago for his personal effects.

"I went to his room to remind him of flu shots and he didn't answer," said Fitzpatrick. "An hour later a young man from property management found him dead in his room. It was very upsetting. It's the third death we've had in two weeks."

"It's that time of year," said the Rev. Glenda Hope. "The earth is dying. The darkness comes early and there can be a heaviness, especially if someone we know has died."

—TOM CARTER

LACY GRIFFIN Security guard

Lacy Griffin, a lanky and youthful-looking security guard who liked wearing button-down-collar shirts in his off hours, died peacefully in his sleep Oct. 17 at the Ambassador Hotel where he had lived more than 14 years.

"I didn't know him well but he was quiet and polite," said social worker Ivet Lemus. "He was very neat and liked wearing button-down collars. I thought he was in his 30s."

Mr. Griffin was 52.

After his friend Jerry Kirby missed seeing him around the hotel for two days he asked management to check his room. New Assistant Manager Barry Stevens found Mr. Griffin lying on his bed, his head resting on a stuffed alligator that Kirby had given him.

"It's very emotional to discover someone like that," said Stevens. "Everything in the room was neat and tidy and he looked asleep. I clapped loudly. But I could see he wasn't breathing. Then I closed the door and went downstairs and called the police."

The social workers said at his Nov. 2 memorial that Mr. Griffin had lost a little weight in recent months but appeared healthy. The medical examiner's office didn't have a cause of death at press time.

Mr. Griffin was an unusual SRO denizen because he seemed to have no problems or character blemishes. The 6-foot-2 former Air Force airman was employed full time as a

security guard. He was not an alcoholic or addict, but smoked cigarettes, his friends said, and he never caused trouble. He liked movies, especially science fiction.

Kirby brought Mr. Griffin's favorite shirt to the memorial — not a button-down — and said to the four people in the room he had recently helped Mr. Griffin expand his wardrobe. He hung it on the window latch above a table on which sat a small vase holding three white lilies. Kirby lit a candle, too. The handsome short-sleeve shirt had deep red masks and red candles with yellow flames figured on a rich tan background showing Africa with its longitude and latitude lines.

They knew each other nine years, but Kirby said in the last three years he had intensified their friendship. He played a rousing gospel song they were fond of on a cassette player. "There's a leak in this old building," it began.

"I gave him a pedicure the day before he died," Kirby said. "I am so glad I did. I kept some things of mine in his room. I cried when he died. I thought it was a dirty trick. We do feel it. We do hurt. And then I thought, oh, I am so glad someone cared about me."

—TOM CARTER

ZEBE BAPTISTE Free spirit

Zebe Baptiste, a free-spirited former resident of the Camelot Hotel, died Nov. 18 at Saint Francis Hospital. She was 49.

"Zebe was one of the sweetest people I knew," Shannon Hugon, the support services manager of the hotel, said. "She didn't like being held down or confined. I miss her."

Ms. Baptiste, a four-year resident of the Camelot on Turk Street, moved from the hotel Oct. 2, said Hugon.

A memorial at the hotel for Ms. Baptiste attended by 12 people was conducted by the Rev. Glenda Hope on Dec. 11.

"We had a good working relationship," Ms. Baptiste's case manager said. "She always made me laugh. But the Tenderloin wasn't for her. Life wasn't easy."


Ms. Baptiste was from San Diego and of Irish extraction, said her case manager, and "she suffered from emphysema."

The Rev. Hope invited people to light small candles at the altar where a large bouquet of flowers and a photograph of Ms. Baptiste, who had green eyes and red hair, was placed.

"She was really a beautiful person — especially after treatment. She really tried to stay sober," said one mourner. "Zebe kept a childlike heart."

—JOHN GOINS

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Sixth Street residents complain of late-night noise

No solution — 2nd meeting with Club Six scheduled

BY JOHN GOINS

Sixth Street has become the place to be — at night, especially on weekends, if you're young and want to party.

And the most happening place is Club Six at the corner of Stevenson. It's owned by Angel Cruz, who says he bought the place in 2001 and has invested \$1 million in the club, including \$110,000 worth of soundproofing to tone down the 12-speaker sound system that booms out of the basement.

Open every night from 9 p.m. to about 3 a.m., Club Six offers a variety of music from house bands to reggae, with DJs and live performances, plus fashion shows and other hip events. An upstairs lounge has

high ceilings and sofas, and in the basement is a dance floor. Capacity: 494.

It's great for young out-of-towners who crowd the place on weekends and spill out on to the sidewalk out front.

But for the residents of nearby SROs, the club is loud and noisy. They say they can't sleep. One of them complained to the police, and others contacted the Central City SRO Collaborative. On Nov. 21, a group met at Club Six with owner Cruz and Capt. Denis O'Leary of Southern Station to air the complaints. About two dozen people were at the meeting.

SOUTHSIDE

"My room faces away from the club," said Rick Cleveland, who lives at the 200-room Seneca Hotel across the alley. "I can hear boom! boom! boom! and every lyric they play."

"Buddy, you want to know what it's like? You come here at 3 in the morning," said David Riley, a tenant of the Baldwin House hotel, a few doors down from the Seneca. "It might sound like a lot of fun, but let's face it, you wouldn't want to be here."

Riley carried a petition that included complaints from residents of the Seneca, Hillsdale, Lawrence and Baldwin House hotels.

"I've installed \$110,000 of soundproofing," Cruz said at the meeting, and it included layers of sheet rock for the walls and vinyl curtains for all of the doors.

"At 11 o'clock at night those walls vibrate," said one tenant. "I've called the police several times. Cruz has never been cited."

O'Leary said in a telephone interview there had been only one complaint about noise lodged against Club Six in the last three months.

"We've received 50 to 100 complaints in the last two years," Dwight Saunders, an outreach specialist of the SRO Collaborative, said, adding that about six tenants won a court settlement against Cruz this year because of the noise, he said.

"He's absolutely wrong," Cruz said. "There was no settlement involving half a dozen

people. One person took me to Small Claims Court for a few hundred dollars.

"Club Six gets music lovers. We get a lot of artists and performers. You'll find that Chico's Pizza does a lot of business because of us," Cruz said. "I care about the neighborhood. We respect the residents here. I was born in Harlem — born and raised in the projects. I know what it's like."

Cruz, a board member of the nonprofit Urban Solutions, an organization working to improve the area, also mentioned other businesses in the neighborhood such as the new Mythic Pizza, a storefront in the Seneca across Stevenson alley from Club Six, that benefit from the club's presence.

"Your clientele look like people from suburbia. We don't need people like that coming here — people smoking dope in Jessie Street, people revving their motorcycles," Cleveland said.

"We don't get dopers here," Cruz said. "In five years, we've never had a stabbing, shooting or drug overdose here."

Tenants also complained about the crowded sidewalk in front of the club at night, particularly on weekends.

"If I had the crowds you folks say I have, this place would be a gold mine. And believe me, this place is not a gold mine," Cruz said.

Charles Faison, head of security at the club, said guards constantly patrol Sixth Street to make sure the sidewalk is clear. "If there's a large line in front of the club, we'll move the crowd into Jessie Street," he said.

"To be quite frank, this club has not been a good neighbor," the SRO Collaborative's Saunders said. "These complaints are ongoing. Regulations need to be enforced. You need to do business in a way that's quite different from the way it's been done before. You should be going out of your way to accommodate the neighbors."

Safety Network Organizer Lisa Block, who facilitated the meeting, said the use of sound limiters for the club's music system might address some of the community's concerns.

"A sound limiter puts a ceiling on the output of a sound system so that the overall sound doesn't go above or below a certain level," said Vajra Granelli, the sound inspector for the Entertainment Commission, who also attended the meeting.

Cruz said his club has sound limiters. In an interview after the meeting, Cruz said he didn't think the meeting was fair.

"We bring in a number of people on the weekends who would never make it to Sixth Street. I have the right to run my business as I choose. Club Six has helped to make this neighborhood safe," he said.

There was no clear resolution to the tenants' complaints.

A follow-up meeting will be held at Club Six on Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. ■



TENDERLOIN HEALTH Outreach and Community Events January 2007

Health Promotion Forum

Topic: Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Speaker: To be decided

Date/Time: January 10, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

HIV Services Forum

Topic: Street Drugs and HIV Meds

Speaker: Jay Fournier, Abbott Labs

Date/Time: January 24, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Client Advisory Panel

Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Executive Director and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

Date/Time: Wednesday, January 10, 11:30 am - 1 pm;

Wednesday, January 31, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health

Orientation: Sunday, January 14, 12 pm - 6:30 pm

220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor

lunch provided

You must pre-register for volunteer trainings.

Stop in/call Emilie (415) 934-1792.

For current groups' schedule or for more information
call: 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org

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SF SEWER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN PROJECT

**The city under
The City needs to be fixed.**

Attend a workshop and give us your feedback on plans to fix it.

Tuesday, January 23

6:30pm-8:30pm

Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
99 Grove Street

Wednesday, January 24

6:30pm-8:30pm

Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center
660 Lombard Street

Saturday, January 27

10 am to noon

Southeast Community Facility
Alex Pitcher Conference Room
1800 Oakdale Avenue

Get info, give input at sfsewers.org

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION: YOUR WATER, WASTEWATER AND MUNICIPAL POWER AGENCY



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Annual Japanese bell-ringing ceremony, Dec. 31, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Asian Art Museum. Get tickets after 10 a.m. in South Court to be part of the 108 groups that will strike a 2,100-pound, 16th-century bronze bell with a log, symbolically welcoming the New Year and curbing the 108 bonno (mortal desires) that, according to Buddhist belief, torment humankind. Information: 581-3500 or www.asianart.org.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 4th Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Alecia Hopper, 421-2926 x302.

Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of the month, noon, 201 Turk Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training, facilitate communication.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

CMHS Consumer Council, 3rd Monday of the month, 5:30-7:30, CMHS, 1380 Howard, Rm. 537. Contact: 255-3428. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

Health & Wellness Action Advocates, 1st Thursday of the month, 1-3 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Contact: 421-2926 x306.

Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for homecare and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Contact: Aaron Wagner, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, 2nd Monday and 4th Wednesday of each month, 6-7 p.m. 870 Market, Suite 928. Contact: 421-2926 x306.

Mental Health Board, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CMHS advisory committee, open to the public. Contact: 255-3474.

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough,

5th Fl. Contact 905-6264. Family member group, open to consumers and the public.

SAFETY

Crime and Safety Committee, meets bimonthly on the Wednesday after the first Monday, SOMPAC, 1035 Folsom, 6 p.m. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

North of Market NERT, bimonthly meeting. Contact Lt. Erica Arteseros, S.F. Fire Department, 970-2022. Disaster preparedness training by the Fire Department.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location changes monthly. To receive monthly information by e-mail, contact Lisa Block, 538-8100 ext. 202 Lblock@iisf.org.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy. Contact Susan Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com. Districtwide association, civic education.

Boeddeker Park cleanup, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, contact the Neighborhood Parks Council, 621-3260.

Central City Democrats, meets four times a year, 301 Eddy St. Community Room. Addresses District 6 residential and business concerns, voter education forums. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Community Leadership Alliance. CLA Community Advocacy Commission monthly meeting, City Hall, Room 034. Subcommittee meetings and informational forums held monthly at the Tenderloin Police Station Community Room. Information: David Villa-Lobos, admin@CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m. Board works to protect SoMa resources for children, youth, families and adults. Gene Friend Recreation

Center, 270 Sixth St. Information: 554-9532

Mid-Market Project Area Committee, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m., Ramada Hotel, 1231 Market. Contact Carolyn Diamond, 362-2500. Market Street redevelopment on Fifth to Tenth street.

North of Market Planning Coalition, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact: 820-1412. TL 2000, neighborhood planning.

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District, 1st Thursday of the month, noon. July and August 2006 meetings: Hastings College of the Law, 198 McAllister, Classroom B. Contact Elaine Zemora, district manager, 440-7570.

SoMa Leadership Council, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., The Arc, 1500 Howard St. at 11th. Emphasizes good planning and good government to maintain a diverse, vibrant, complete neighborhood. Contact: Jim Meko, 624-4309 or jim.meko@comcast.net.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th. Contact: SOMPAC office, 487-2166.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police community room, 301 Eddy. Contact Paul Bains at 358-3981 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses sharing information and taking on neighborhood development issues.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

Mayor's Disability Council, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, Rm. 400. Contact: 554-6789. Open to the public.

Senior Action Network, general meeting, second Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon, St. Mary's Cathedral. Monthly committee meetings, 965 Mission #700: Pedestrian Safety, third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; Senior Housing Action, third Wednesday, 1:30; Information: 546-1333 and www.senioractionnetwork.org.

SUPERVISORS' COMMITTEES

 City Hall, Room 263

Budget Committee Daly, Duffy, Peskin, Thursday, 1 p.m.

City Services Committee McGoldrick, Duffy, Ma, first and third Monday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

The central city's voice just got louder.

Central City Extra is now on SFGate. The Extra is one of the Gate's new Community Blogs. The Chronicle's SFGate is the 4th largest news Web site with 6.5 million views daily.

We are posting The Extra's stories on our Gate blog, which we call Tenderloin Beat. We are also posting stories not printed in The Extra. Check out Tenderloin Beat at SFGate.com.