

# Mid-Market PAC regroups after 5-year hiatus

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having \$199 million from property taxes to work with over its 30-year lifespan. Among other things, it proposed spending \$30 million of that on infrastructure improvements, \$20 million on small business development, historic preservation, building rehab and façade and ground-floor tenant improvements, and \$7 million on planning and community outreach.

After the Redevelopment Agency Commission approved the 2005 plan, the proposal won the Planning Commission's blessing, then was presented to the Board of Supervisors and died a quiet death.

"It never made it to a hearing," Redevelopment's Mike Grisso said. There was "never any discussion."

The plan was last spotted in January '06 at the board's Land Use Committee. But in a January interview, Supervisor Sophie Maxwell, who chaired that committee, claimed she couldn't remember what happened to the plan.

Supervisor Daly, whose District 6 includes the entire area under discussion, ignored repeated requests from The Extra for comment, though he is routinely fingered as the one who killed the Central Market Redevelopment Plan.

Supervisor John Avalos, Daly's assistant when the plan came to the board, painted an abstract picture of city politics that is, in part, an exercise in horse-trading. It went like this: If Daly, for whatever reason, wasn't supporting a redevelopment plan for his own district, other supervisors, who might need his support for efforts closer to their respective homes, weren't likely to defy him on such a project, whatever they thought of its merits, Avalos said.

"I can remember being upset at the PAC board for always asking, 'What does Daly think?'" said Carolyn Diamond, executive director of the Market Street Association, a major player in the planning effort from the beginning.

"I just think Chris Daly didn't like the whole idea of gentrification," she said. "Meanwhile, Market was crumbling. It still is."

And so, at the behest of the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development, 21 members of the PAC reconvened March 31 at the Art

Institute of California — for the first time in nearly five years — to begin anew the work of setting a redevelopment plan in motion.

"We think the landscape has changed," Economic and Workforce Development staffer Rich Hillis says. "Everybody we've talked to wants to see more investment in Market. It's possible that when this comes before the board, they'll be more amenable."

Redevelopment Agency Project Area Manager Lisa Zayas-Chien, who led the meeting, is soliciting volunteers for the 12 vacant seats on the PAC. Four of those are allotted to residents but Zayas-Chien says she's received no applications for that category.

Renoir Hotel owner Byron Yee chaired the PAC in its previous incarnation and has returned for the latest effort. He admits he "was disappointed" that all the committee's work "was derailed at the last minute," but says now, "maybe there's a different feeling about what can and should be done."

As to the goals of the effort, the housing "has moved forward. The economic components have not moved forward," Yee said, citing the boarded-up storefronts. "The whole idea is to make the area vibrant, with all sorts of storefronts, restaurants and venues that people would feel comfortable coming to."

Once the new members are voted in, the first order of business will be to review the previous plan's elements to determine which need updating.

Zayas-Chien said that although "some of the groundwork has been done," she nonetheless expects developing a new plan to take at least a year.

Another original PAC member who's back for the renewed effort, Theatre Bay Area's Brad Erickson, spoke for many when he challenged the group: "The problem last time was a political problem. I would hate to see it stall out."

"I don't have a magic answer to that," Zayas-Chien conceded, but promised: "We're going to get a lot of support from the mayor's office and keep the board in the loop. We can only do our best."

The elephant in the room in these conversations is that Supervisor Daly will have been termed out of office before the new plan is anticipated to be finalized. In March 2005, as the plan neared completion, he criticized it for "not doing enough to address our affordable housing needs."

Given that the plan mandated a much higher proportion of affordable housing (32%) than the city typically requires (12%), many found his position inexplicable.

Nonetheless, in the intervening years, some of what the plan hoped to accomplish has come to pass. A Central Market Community Benefit District created in 2007 has won praise from merchants for helping to maintain order through two-man teams of "community guides" who patrol the hood, apply a little heat and offer a bit of help.

And, according to the Redevelopment Agency, 320 new units of affordable housing have opened in the area since 2004, the biggest of which, Mercy Housing's 136 units at 10th and Mission streets, constituted the agency's largest single investment to date in affordable housing (\$54 million). Another 107, targeted for seniors, will be completed this summer at the Edith Witt project at Ninth and Jessie streets.

In conversations with The Extra, Hillis has suggested increasing outdoor, street fair-type market activity in U.N. Plaza; augmenting the CBD's community guides program to reduce crime; and coordinated efforts by the Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts and the Tenderloin Economic Development Project to transform the area into a cultural arts district.

Exit Theater and the Gray Area Foundation for the Arts have been awarded façade improvement grants, and Hillis' office, the Arts Commission and Grants for the Arts have applied for \$250,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts for "these types of investments" and an extension of the Art in Storefronts program, intended to make vacant storefront space more attractive to potential tenants, such as arts organizations.

The \$954,000 that Redevelopment has earmarked for the project in 2010-11 includes \$120,000 for a historic building and district survey; \$664,000 for environmental and redevelopment plan adoption documents; \$150,000 for the PAC, community outreach and public notices; and \$20,000 for legal costs. The money comes from existing Redevelopment Agency funds, Redevelopment's historic fund committee and a loan from the city's General Fund. ■

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