

Greed shows its ugly face on Market St.

Hostel takeover a nasty end to good old Grant Building

BY GEOFF LINK

1 095 Market St., a.k.a. the Grant Building, no longer what it once was, is something else again.

This '06 quake survivor evolved as a stately house of progressive thought and action. It was home in recent times to SFNLAF, Agape Foundation, S.F. Mental Health Association, Greenaction, Human Rights Commission, the Bicycle Coalition and the Commissions On the Status of Women and Delinquency Prevention, and scores more like them.

The Grant Building was the birthplace of Open Hand, the Social Services Directory, Friends of the Urban Forest, Public Interest Economics, Livable City and San Francisco Study Center, founded in 1972 to help the nascent neighborhood movement grow and the burgeoning non-profit sector thrive.

"If the landlord ... wants you out, then out you go"

SOUTHERN STATION ARRESTING OFFICER

The populist legacy of former Mayor Phelan, the Grant Building was a haven for non-profits and others

who help others.

This venerable eight-story, 140-unit complex withstood the shaking of two mighty quakes to remain standing at Seventh and Market. An eyesore, now it's the face of corporate greed, taken over by a father-son team that's preparing to turn the place into a happenin' hostel — like those in Amsterdam and Sydney — much more than a bunk for sleeping-bag youth.

From the date of ownership — a \$9 million transaction in 2008 — Peter Johnson and his 1095 Market Street LLC undertook a campaign to rid the building of tenants not locked into large, long-term leases. Only Study Center and Community Housing Partnership were. CHP occupied most of the seventh floor; Study Center had all of the sixth and three rooms on the second.

Study Center had been at the Grant Building longest of anybody, maybe ever, from our founding in March 1972 till mid-January 2012, two months shy of 40 years.

When Study Center opened in a single room on the second floor, the building bustled with liberal lawyers and several-room suites of nonprofits and city boards. The Grant Building was a good place to be if you wanted to operate from the thick of it.

Johnson and son Simon say they hope to make their likely hostile hostel a work site for Larkin Street Youth Services clients. Peter

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My Take is an occasional series of opinion pieces based on reporting and personal experience.

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

"ONE DOLLAR"



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Elderly Chinese women line up their own little dollar store of fresh produce and canned goods, every item \$1, on the sidewalk in front of the Grant Building at Seventh and Market.

FREE FOOD FOR SALE

Little old ladies set up shop on area sidewalks

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

WITH the Heart of the City Farmers' Market gearing up across the street at 8:30 a.m. on a recent Wednesday, six elderly Asian women line up their wares across the front of the Grant Building and entreat pedestrians, calling softly: "Buy. You buy."



Another of their popular spots to sell is at U.N. Plaza in front of Carl's Jr.

Canned Bartlett pears, bagged carrots and onions, boxes of Land O' Lakes American cheese, packages of whole wheat bagels, jars of Algood peanut butter, dried beans, sesame crackers and squat cans of evaporated milk were neatly displayed at their feet, along with grape juice and orange juice in plastic liters — clearly food obtained from community agencies' free distribution programs.

"One dollar," one of the women told a sidewalk shopper. That was the going price for most items, some of which bore a marked notice: "Not For Retail Sale."

The women are a mid-Market phenomenon, on the scene the past year or so, operating at U.N. Plaza, on Market Street at Seventh and at the corners of Mission and Sixth and Seventh streets. Sometimes there's only one, typically two or more are together, with six to eight in tandem on farmers' market Wednesdays.

They are Chinese or Vietnamese and look to be in their 70s. They don't talk except about price and won't answer questions, professing to not speak English.

They've been seen exiting a van together, brought to the area by a middle-aged Asian man who occasionally stands observing them as they sell food.

They rub some people the wrong way. Some feel the women are selling free food that maybe they took right out of the mouth of somebody who needs it. And they're making a profit while some poor family is going hungry. That's an unlikely scenario given how widely available free food is in the neighborhood.

Besides the soup kitchens of St. Anthony and Glide, there are more than 30 San Francisco Food Bank-supplied food

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