

Central Market CBD looks to expand southward

BY TOM CARTER

THE CENTRAL MARKET CBD, flush with the success of its cleanliness and safety programs on Market Street, is considering expanding south toward Howard Street or farther and has sent 1,000 letters to area property owners asking what they think of the idea.

The letters were mailed in June with another 300 to current CBD property owners. The requested return date is July 6.

The timing coincides with the expiration of the CBD's seven-year term. Major changes can be made during the renewal process with the city, so in March the CBD formed a steering committee that meets monthly to mull issues, including expansion. A continuation plan is due before the Board of Supervisors for approval before May 31, 2013.

The CBD covers the south side of Market from Fifth Street to Ninth with little boundary jogs north of Market at each end. The southern boundary stops at Stevenson, but goes south to Jessie from Fifth to between Sixth and Seventh. At Fifth, it dips down to Mission to include the Mint area. Another southern jog to Jessie occurs

between Eighth and Ninth. Teams of community "ambassadors" wearing brown jackets with identifying orange lettering ply these streets and have reduced offensive behaviors by their presence or by helping people.

If it expands, Central Market would become the largest among the city's 10 CBDs, making the Tenderloin CBD the second largest.

Central Market now is booming with new businesses. The latest, Dolby Laboratories, joins Twitter, Zendesk, Yammer, One Kings Lane, CallSocket, Desmos and Zoosk. The mayor's office also reports that since 2011, more than 10 new small businesses, four new residential developments, two hotel projects and 10 new or expanded arts groups have opened or are in the works.

It's a contrast to the gloomy, 2006 scene when property owners feared further deterioration of their neighborhood's business climate, cleanliness and atmosphere. The nonprofit CBD was formed to be an antidote. Its programs were to increase foot traffic and strengthen small businesses and cultural institutions, eventually attracting new investments, which, with a tremendous boost from the mayor's office, has been the case.

Going south depends on the sur-

vey results.

"After we hear back, we'll have a clear idea of what the boundaries should be," said James Chappell, facilitating the June meeting of the roughly 20-member steering committee held in the Whitcomb Hotel. Chappell is with MJM Management Group that the CBD hired for \$85,000 to guide it through the renewal. "We're as interested in no as well as yes."

The expansion draft's southern boundary is Howard Street stretching west to 11th Street, dropping south to Tehama between Fifth and Sixth. It would add 3.6 million square feet to the area, four times the size of the existing CBD, and the benefit district's annual budget would jump from \$791,000 to \$2.4 million, the largest in the city. Across Market, the TL CBD budget is \$1.3 million.

"This only takes in half the neighborhood," said John Elberling, head of the nonprofit builder TODCO, a member of several SoMa committees over the years and currently on the Western SoMa Task Force. "Why not go to Harrison? The neighborhood considers itself going all the way to the freeway and you're cutting it in half."

"We didn't think about going further," said Chappell, because the CBD staff and board weren't sure they could

handle any more. There will be big changes when Folsom Street becomes a two-way main artery for SoMa and a shopping district.

Daniel Hurtado, CBD executive director, said the question is whether to expand to Folsom or Harrison "or lean more toward Market — what do we want?"

One woman said that expansion to either Folsom or Harrison would "stretch the ambassadors too much." But their presence, someone pointed out, is determined by how many people are on the sidewalks. Chappell had a chart showing that although the draft boundaries expand the CBD by five times, cleaning and maintenance costs barely double because the southward streets don't need the constant cleaning of the Market Street blocks.

Pondering where to draw any southern boundary line, the committee generally agreed that for even cleaning, both sides of a street should be included because "the wind knows no favorites," as someone said.

Elberling said the CBD should have gone early to the Western SoMa Task Force, which advises the Planning Department, to discuss expansion. The next day, when the task force met, Hurtado and Chappell were on the agenda. ■

No ifs or ands in litter — but plenty of butts

Youth center team gets hands-on experience with messy side of smoking

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

AMONG all the efforts to brighten the Tenderloin, none holds a candle to the 11 young people who, in just over two hours, picked up 2,072 cigarette butts along 24 blocks in their neighborhood. The kids broke into a handful of small groups, covering the area in three 45-minute sessions, collecting, bagging and later tallying the butts block by block.

The 14- to 21-year-olds are members of Team Let's Stop Tobacco, formed in May 2011 by the Vietnamese Youth Development Center on Eddy Street.

"Actually, picking up the cigarettes was awful," said City College student Michelle Tran, 21, who's been a regular at the center since she was 6. "I enjoyed the teamwork, but the smell gave me a headache."

Tran's favorite part of the project was researching how corner stores contribute — or don't — to the neighborhood's health. From the tax collector's office the team learned that citywide, half of all cigarettes are purchased in corner stores.

The high school and college students counted and mapped 46 TL tobacco outlets. Clipboards in hand, they discovered that most stores weren't complying with city regulations to properly post retail tobacco licenses and no-smoking signs, maintain trash cans outside, and limit advertising, much of it for tobacco and alcohol, which isn't supposed to cover more than a third of a storefront.

"Sometimes the store owners were cooperative with us," Tran said, "but sometimes they tried to get rid of us. That made me think they were hiding something."

Those stores, team members learned, are a vital part of the

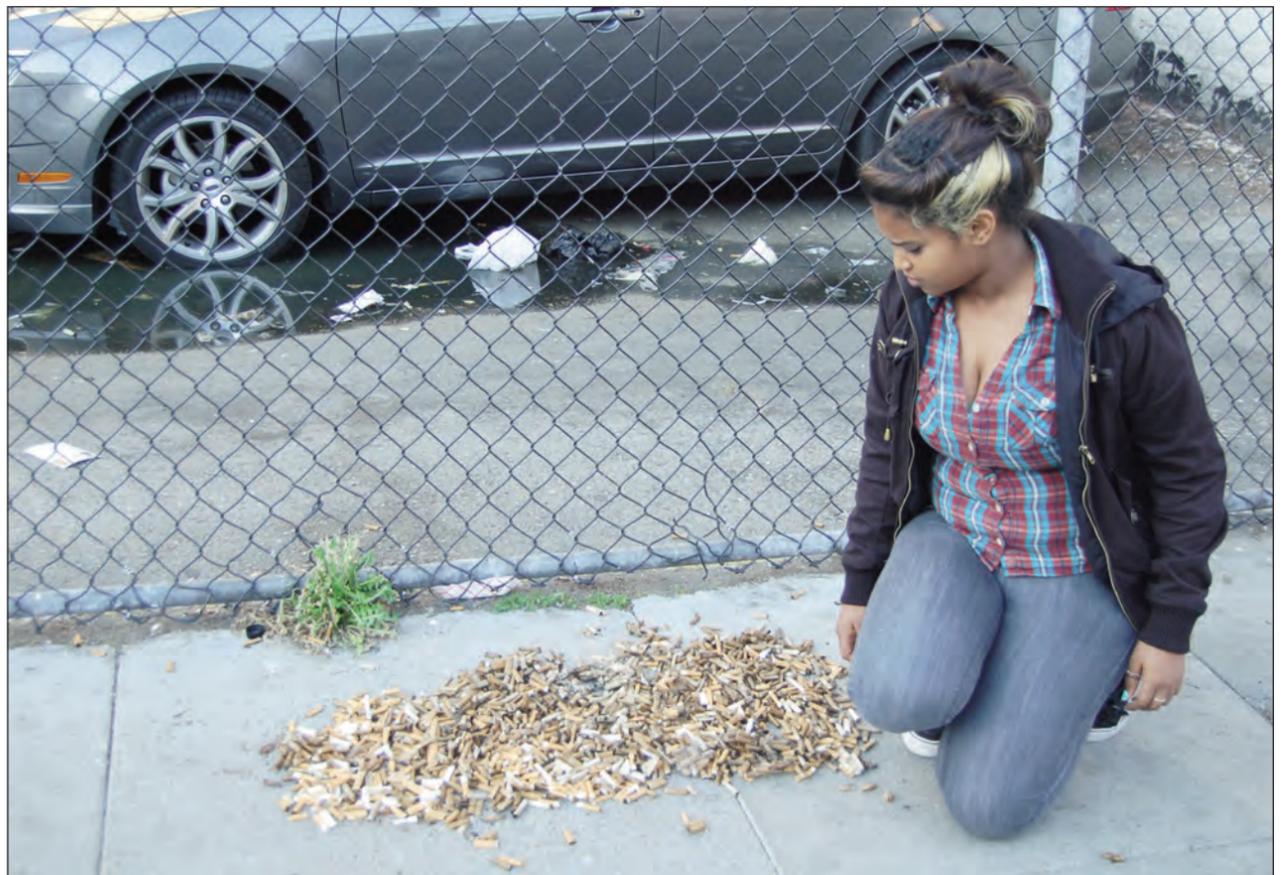


PHOTO BY JESSICA ESTRADA

Ruth Beyene, 15, checks out the 2,072 cigarette butts she and 10 other members of Team Let's Stop Tobacco collected from the Tenderloin's gritty streets in about 2½ hours. "The smell gave me a headache," says a teammate.

Tenderloin environment: Neighbors they interviewed in focus groups reported that they shop at a corner store an average of 2.4 times a week. Young people said they buy mostly snack foods and aren't concerned, as many adults are, that the stores lack fresh produce, meat and dairy.

A story in the July 2007 Extra found that of the 50 mom-and-pops in the TL at the time, half carried more than a dozen varieties of fruits and vegetables, but the rest stocked only potatoes, onions, apples and bananas.

"The tobacco project teaches the young people how to do advocacy, how to do research and take action, plus they get a stipend to do the work — \$80 to \$100 a month," says Jessica Estrada, the Vietnamese Center's

youth advocacy specialist, who is the team's project coordinator. "Also, their work isn't just about tobacco — it's about food justice and alcohol abuse and how all of it together affects their neighborhood."

Team Let's Stop Tobacco funding comes from the city Health Department's 22-year-old Tobacco Free Project, which make grants to neighborhood organizations working to reduce tobacco use.

The team also interviewed officials from the tax collector's office about how the city's 2010 cigarette litter abatement fee is being implemented. It adds 20¢ per pack to help pay for cleaning up butts and tobacco packaging detritus, estimated to represent 22% of San Francisco's side-

walk and gutter litter.

Team efforts this summer include drafting letters to the city Health and Public Works departments and the state Department of Alcohol Beverage Control, urging them to enforce tobacco-related laws, and sponsoring a fall press conference to promote awareness of the issues.

"The work of these youth advocates and their project coordinator is critical to efforts to combat the tobacco industry's activities," says Susana Hennessey Lavery, Tobacco Free health educator. "They've shown tremendous leadership and real commitment to making the Tenderloin a place where all residents can be safe and healthy." ■