

Intersection fights to pull out of crisis

\$200,000 in debt, group slashes staff, cuts performances

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

INTERSECTION FOR THE ARTS turns 50 next year, a venerable age for any nonprofit, especially one that has incubated thousands of artists in all disciplines, helping them to get their art in front of audiences.

But before it hits that milestone, Intersection has run out of money to fund its most visible operations — resident artists' theater and music performances, visual arts exhibitions, and youth and community education programs.

Board Chair Yancy Widmer and then-Interim Executive Director Arthur Combs on May 22 blasted an email to Intersection's 16,000 followers: "Our financial situation is deeply challenged, and it has become apparent that the current business model is no longer sustainable."

Intersection had nine staff, but June 1 it furloughed three key program directors and a communications assistant and stopped producing its own works, except for a handful that were already in the pipeline. The city's oldest alternative arts space — where James Broughton and Allen Ginsberg read poetry, Spalding Gray did monologues and Robin Williams honed his comedy shticks — is facing an uncertain future.

So far, the only good news is that the 124 incubator arts projects are unlikely to be affected. Intersection serves as their fiscal sponsor, a tax-exempt nonprofit that manages non-exempt organizations' finances and gives their donors tax-deductibility for any contributions. It's a way to launch new arts projects, sustain temporary ones and help more established ones get firmer organizational footing.

The projects do their own fundraising. Intersection, a fiscal sponsor since 1977, charges them 8% of the grants, donations and contributions they receive as an administrative fee. Galeria de la Raza, Litquake and San Francisco Blues Festival are among the groups Intersection has sponsored.

"Intersection is fragile right now, but all our fiscal sponsor projects are safe," Widmer told 150 supporters, project staff, board members and funders who convened July 15 to have "A Community Conversation" about Intersection's future. "The money we manage for the projects was never in danger."

Randy Rollison, Intersection interim

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MANOR HOUSE DELAYED

Plumbing woes, more postpone reopening

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TECH BUS FIRMS' FEE KICKS IN

Tariff triples with more parking cops on duty

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

IN THE SHADOW OF TECH



ILLUSTRATION LISE STAMPELI

It's been over three years since the Twitter tax break triggered a tech run on the central city. Now, all of Market Street's midsection falls under tech's shadow. But not the Tenderloin.

SNAPSHOT OF CHANGE

In central city, only the scary TL is resisting gentrification

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN AND GEOFF LINK

THE HEALTH AND VITALITY of the city for 175 years has been measured by the pulse of Market Street — the 3-mile-long municipal artery stretching from the Embarcadero to Twin Peaks. Early settlers called it the Path of Gold when Sierra miners with flakes of ore dropping from their bulging pockets trundled the street's plank walkways.

It survived the 1906 quake and fire and proudly supported the great rebuilding, site of Phelan, Flood and Palace edifices.

The 1920s and '30s brought playhouses and grand movie palaces to the thoroughfare. Some saw the flashing lights of the marquees and called it the Broadway of the West.

When Jack Kerouac stumbled from the Greyhound station on Seventh in the late '40s he wrote of all-night cafeterias, pinball arcades and a vivid street scene throbbing with sailors, hucksters, junkies and whores.

Twenty-five years later, traffic was blocked and the street dug up to build BART.

Market Street's midsection — the seven-block stretch from Fifth Street to Van Ness Avenue — saw a four-decade decline, marked by empty buildings and closed storefronts, from the '70s till now.

That same stretch — dubbed Central Market in a bland mix of bureaucratic and real estate parlance — has become the measure of San Francisco's renewed vigor, glowing from the self-proclaimed civic wisdom of tax breaks and economic strategies, energized by a concentration of newly located tech companies and their expanding workforces.

Market Street, in this early 21st century decade that is dominated by tech, has taken on a new identity with a fresh-scrubbed, suburban personality that is rubbing off on the central city. This is a snapshot of that change three-plus years into the Twitter tax break that triggered it.



PHOTO ALLEN WILLNER

Resident artist Aaron Davidman's solo production, "Wrestling Jerusalem," premiered at Intersection in March.

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