



MARK ELLINGER

The *Shre Ganeshai* is among the hotels eligible for a loan.

Free money to rehab 6th St. SROs

Redevelopment offers \$200,000 now, \$500,000 July 1

BY KAREN OBERDORFER

THE Redevelopment Agency has begun taking applications for a Sixth Street hotel-rehab loan program that seems like a drop in a bottomless bucket but that community members say finally makes good on the agency's more than decade-old promise to improve the hood.

The Redevelopment Agency has available, through June, \$200,000 for loans for quality-of-life improvements and code compliance to SRO hotel owners along Sixth Street from Stevenson to Harrison. Another \$500,000 will become available starting July 1. Loan amounts range from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

Most of these loans will be forgivable. Hotel owners will not have to repay the loans — if they adhere to “affordability restrictions.” This means keeping rents on a modest percentage of their rooms cheap for up to 25 years. The 29 hotels that line the Sixth Street corridor and nine others within the South of Market redevelopment project area are eligible — about 2,500 SRO rooms in all.

The Redevelopment Agency mailed out loan applications the first week of April to all Sixth Street hotel owners, and handed them out at the April 9 South of Market Project Area Committee meeting. No applications had been received by the end of April, said Jeff White, development specialist in the Housing Division at the Redevelopment Agency. It's still too soon, he said.

LATEST SHOT IN THE ARM

Neighborhood activists say this modest largesse is a long time coming. Redevelopment reports it's just the latest in a string of improvements that include sidewalk upgrades, hotel rehab, and shots in the arm for small businesses.

In fact, it's hard on the heels of the Six on Sixth efforts of Roger Gordon's Urban Solutions which in two years has been making little inroads on skid row.

“I believe the loan program will be extremely significant, creating a dramatic improvement; tenants all over the city will be wishing they could have this,” said Randy

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BUGLE CALL

Salvation Army's big plans for Turk St.

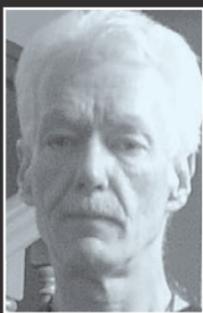
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WOMAN AT WAR

Tiny nun's assault on homelessness

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IN FOCUS

Old hotels seen with new eye

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PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON SKID ROW



Sixth Street — been down so long it's starting to look up.

PHOTO BY CARL ANGEL

Positively 6th St.

New businesses, loans bringing optimism to central city armpit

BY TOM CARTER

FOR three months after opening last August, Dahi Donnelly and his partner, Brian Sheehy, went through the grim and depressing business of throwing people out of their sleek new bar at 43 Sixth St.

The ambitious Irish lads, who had learned bartending in the U.K., had slaved for months renovating the rundown gay bar that 50 years before had been an Irish bar called the Clover.

In a major coup, they won a 5-0 decision from the Board of Permit Appeals and got the bar rezoned for entertainment. It meant they could offer a different DJ every night, their specialty business previously being providing DJ entertainment to the bay's luxury cruising boats.

No way would they let their “Anu” bar, “a nocturnal refuge” named after an Irish goddess, drown from a deluge of druggies.

The partners are part of a handful of determined new

Dahi Donnelly and his partner are making a go of their Anu bar at 43 Sixth St.

businesses that have seeped into the rough fabric of Sixth Street between Market and Howard in the last six to 12 months. With a few other established businesses that have repositioned themselves, and still others that are resurrecting themselves such as the old burned-out Delta Hotel—opening this month as the splendid Bayanihan House at Mission—they portend a smoother future.

Moreover, many believe a true transformation is eventually coming in this, the city's armpit, academically known as “a center of urban squalor.” Some are getting improvement loans earmarked to revitalize those two blocks. The Anu bar has an application pending for its facade.

“When we first came here, it (the neighborhood) scared the life out of us,” Donnelly says from his dank office underneath the bar. “But we saw the potential. This was for sale for very little and the rent was low. It took the life savings.” He pauses. “Then nobody came but crackheads.”

What turned things around was hiring a stout doorman on weekends, regular visits from the cops, the word getting out on the street about the place, and good publicity. In January, 7 x 7 magazine gave it a Best New Bar rating and the Guardian said Alison Bird behind the bar was the Sexiest Bartender in the Bay Area.

“So that was it,” Donnelly says. “Apart from the screaming up and down the sidewalks, the urinating in the middle of the road, and occasional fights and scary people, it was fine.”

The problems were worse two years ago and quite obvious. “Illegal drugs were sold and used openly,” to quote from Six on Sixth, an imaginative plan that suggested how to turn the two blocks around in a year for \$1

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