

GOOD NEWS for...

TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER (TARC) has received a \$1.15 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Health Resource Services Administration. It's only the second directly funded Title III HIV Early Intervention Services grant to be awarded in San Francisco since 1991 and, in the competitive field of HIV funding, TARC was one of 27 programs funded nationwide in 2003. TARC, founded in 1990, annually provides 6,000 homeless and marginally housed Tenderloin residents with a weekday breakfast program, psychological and social support, nutritional supplements, syringe exchange, on-site primary HIV medical care and medication management. It also offers long-term housing subsidies and operates 20 rooms of HIV emergency housing in the Riviera Hotel at 420 Jones and the Kean Hotel in the Mission. The new grant will allow TARC, located at 187 Golden Gate, to expand its weekend services, add more mental health and primary care services during the week, and give extensive medical care to an additional 70 residents living with HIV. For more information: 431-7476 or www.tarcsf.org.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

This column needs regular infusions. If you have some good news (no events, please), send it to marjorie@studycenter.org.

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

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Unclogging Market St.

Studying how to pick up the pace along S.F.'s main drag

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

MARKET Street, analyzed, torn up, surveyed, torn up anew, planned again and again over the years, is once more the target of strategists. This time it's the San Francisco Transportation Authority's Market Street Study — an examination of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle use from the Ferry Building to Octavia.

"This study is unlike others in the past," Adam Leigland, senior transportation planner, told The Extra, following his presentation at the October Tenderloin Future Collaborative meeting. "It's focused on transportation and doesn't address land use, urban design or socioeconomic aspects. And it's focused on quick delivery: a 1- to 5-year time frame for projects that are cheap and politically feasible."

Adding more pedestrian countdown signals and pedestrian scrambles, improving signage, changing the timing of signals, restriping crosswalks, enforcing parking regulations, and increasing the number of cops on street beats are some of the modest recommendations expected to come from a final report, due in December.

The idea for the new study originated almost three years ago "from grass-root concerns, not from the top down," Leigland said. Again — as in a 1990 Department of Parking and Traffic study and a 1997 Transportation Authority report — the rallying cry, for some, was banning cars on Market.

"Both those times it was found that the idea wouldn't really produce benefits," Leigland said. "This time, the debate spread to a wider audience — SPUR, the Bicycle Coalition, WalkSF, merchant groups, Muni, taxicab drivers, the Yerba Buena Alliance and more. They reframed the question to ask how to improve Market Street for transit, bikes and pedestrians while acknowledging that it's important for autos as well."

"That new way of looking at the problem is just what planners love, and it set the tone for the study."

The ad hoc working group, with the Transportation Authority as its shepherd, got \$200,000 from the Board of Supervisors to conduct the study plus another \$75,000 from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The official report will be an implementation plan.

Leigland has made presentations to many organizations, pulling them into the planning process. Asked if any serious disagreements surfaced and how they were resolved, he cited bicycles lanes and limits on auto use as two areas that polarized some participants.

"Merchants, for example, were worried that auto restrictions would hurt business," he said. "So we surveyed people actually patronizing Market Street establishments and found that less than 2% of them ever drive on the street. Most people driving on Market are using it to get to the freeways or Twin Peaks, not to the San Francisco Shopping Centre. The key to achieving buy-in has been a process of fighting myth with reality."

Data collection produced some eye-openers: During one hour on Market and Fifth, the study group counted 200 bikes, 1,000 pedestrians, 160 buses or streetcars carrying

4,000 passengers, and 650 autos. Almost 25%, or 160,000 Muni riders, wind up on Market every weekday. Public transit runs about 33% behind schedule. More than 20% of the city's auto accidents occur on Market. And the street has the most pedestrian-bicycle collisions.

"What we want to do," Leigland says, "is make the street safer for pedestrians, reduce travel time on public transit, make transit more reliable, create safer bicycle routes and accommodate those who have to drive cars on the street."

Findings and recommendations to date will be revealed at a final public workshop, 5 to 8 p.m. on Nov. 6 at the Nordstrom Board Room, 5th floor, San Francisco Shopping Centre.

"It will be a rolling presentation, which means people can come and go," Leigland explained. Any reactions garnered from this last final presentation will be incorporated into the study group's report.

LITTLE SAIGON PROJECTS

The city has its Chinatown and Japantown, but no identified commercial center for the estimated 15,000 Vietnamese who live in San Francisco, about 40% of them in the Tenderloin. Ideas for changing that go back to when then-Mayor Art Agnos was still holding the city's reins, Kim Nguyen told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative.

"The Vietnamese community started talking to Mayor Agnos in 1991, and I'm here today to present our plans for a Little Saigon Project," said Nguyen, project manager. "The commercial center is already there, on Larkin from

Eddy to O'Farrell, but we want to clean the street, make it safer, more economically viable, and also celebrate the diversity of the Vietnamese."

About 70% of the businesses along the Larkin corridor are Vietnamese-owned, she said.

The project's first plans are to erect "gates" at Eddy — pylons made of white marble that may have lion heads on them — utility pole banners that say "Welcome to Little Saigon," and directional signs elsewhere in the city to guide tourists to the area.

Funding for this phase of the project, estimated to cost about \$25,000 and expected to be complete by the end of the year, is being raised from individuals, businesses and private foundations, Nguyen said, and the city also may contribute to the project.

A much larger Little Saigon Improvement Project, also under way, designates the entire northwest corner of the area as Little Saigon.

Under the auspices of the Southeast Asian Community Center, this effort would organize a merchants association, help find housing for Southeast Asians, clean the area's sidewalks and document the organizing effort in the pages of Central City Extra, including a page of news, half in Vietnamese as well as English.

"The project with the banners using the name Little Saigon is plausible, and is a good starting point," said Philip Nguyen, SEACC executive director. "But the project needs to be larger. In the long run, we would like to designate this entire section of the Tenderloin as Little Saigon." ■

OBITUARY

Arnett Watson "Voice of the community"

Homeless people in San Francisco — and beyond — lost an articulate advocate when Arnett Watson died of a cerebral aneurysm Sept. 28. She was 49.

Ms. Watson, an organizer for the Coalition on Homelessness, moved here from Detroit in 1982, and was homeless herself for a while in the mid-1980s. By the end of the decade, she had become a staunch defender of the rights of homeless individuals and families who lived in shelters, said Paul Boden, executive director of the Coalition.

"Arnett was a 13-year Tenderloin resident who showed that homeless people can help each other and can make things better for the community," Boden said. "In the early 1990s, the newly formed Coalition and the Homeless Advocacy Project got the Department of Social Services to institute a grievance procedure, including appeals, for anyone kicked out of a shelter that was under contract to DSS.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STREET SHEET



Arnett Watson helped institute a grievance procedure for people in DSS shelters.

Arnett helped set up that grievance procedure and staffed it for 11 years."

The procedure has since become a national model, adopted in Washington, D.C., New York, Los Angeles and Cincinnati, Boden said.

Susan Mizner, acting director of the Mayor's Office on Disability, recalled working with Ms. Watson on the procedure. "Helping to draft it was my summer project as a law student," Mizner said. "One provision of the procedure was creating a client advocate position — an \$18,000-a-year job that had lots of applicants, including Arnett. I wasn't sure she had the qualifications, but she stepped up to the plate and ran with it. She was a perfect, perfect fit for the job."

In recent years, Ms. Watson sat on the board of directors of several agencies, including the Coalition on Homelessness, Community Housing Partnership and Central City Hospitality House.

"Arnett was on our board for three years," said Hospitality House executive director Jackie Jenks. "I think that what stuck out about her was that she was always the voice of the community. She kept us focused on why we're here, on our mission, even when discussions got bogged down in budget problems. She was a strong woman with her own voice who wasn't afraid to use it."

An Oct. 10 memorial service at St. Boniface Church drew hundreds of Ms. Watson's friends and colleagues. She is survived by her sisters, Patricia Watson and Susan Watson of Detroit, as well as aunts, nieces and nephews, and was buried in Detroit. ■

— MARJORIE BEGGS