

Prop. L author not registered to vote in S.F. – office a mailbox

Campaign gets new front man from City – filing in question

BY PHIL TRACY

WHO is Greg Stephens, and why does he want San Francisco to give him \$10 million? I learned more than I expected when I set out to answer that question.

Stephens is the erstwhile filmmaker from Los Angeles who is behind Proposition L on the November ballot. First off, he's not a registered voter in San Francisco. He was taken off the rolls in January 2000 when he moved out of the city, according to Elections Department data.

With no backing from the film and theater communities and unanimous opposition from City Hall, Stephens bought his way onto the ballot with an initiative that would give \$10 million a year from the city's hotel tax – and total control over the money – to him to buy and restore old movie theaters.

His address on Chestnut Street turns out to be a mailbox. And his campaign team has largely turned over, but not before filing a disclosure statement that has been called into question by the father of his chief financial backer.

Stephens' film career is one short film made in 1997 that was never

distributed. No further filmmaking. At 41, Stephens doesn't seem to have a job.

He went to film school at USC, and both of his employment references, from back in the early '90s, are firms based in Los Angeles. He has told people he's living off his savings as an inventor. No one I talked to can say what Stephens invented.

Prop. L plays on the fact that a number of neighborhood single-screen theaters have closed in the last few years, a phenomenon replicated throughout the country. Nonetheless, San Franciscans are upset. They formed a group two years ago, S.F. Neighborhood Theaters Foundation, and began working with the city to try to put the brakes on this trend. Stephens did not join the group.

Instead, Stephens paid San

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO



2269 Chestnut St.: The mailbox address for Save Our Theaters.

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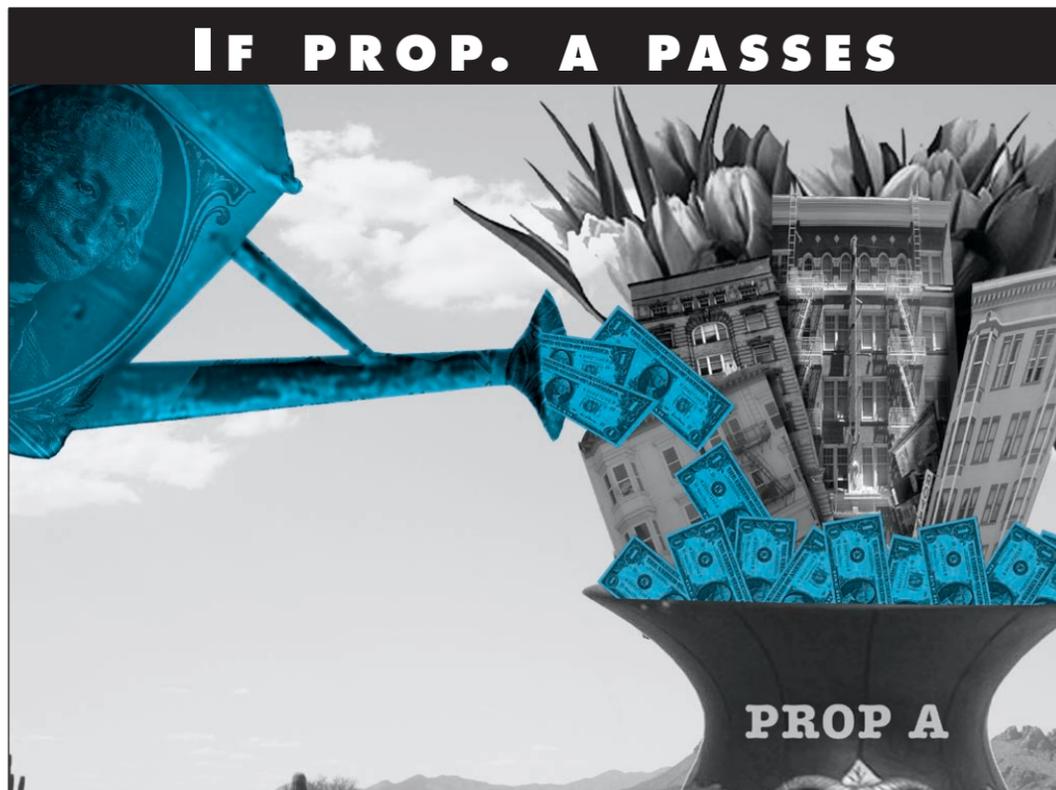


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CARL ANGEL

\$200 million will grow to \$600 million with state, federal, foundation, corporate dollars.

Bold proposition

Nonprofit developers, city ready to ease housing crisis

BY TOM CARTER

NONPROFIT developers are at the starting line reviewing their hot leads as they anticipate a Proposition A go signal that will send them site-searching on the city's closely watched affordable housing market. Poised alongside is City Hall.

If the \$200 million Prop. A bond issue passes with a two-thirds vote Nov. 2 – \$90 million of it for the homeless and near penniless – housing experts say that can leverage a \$600 million total to transform homelessness in San Francisco.

The \$90 million would become the major pipeline for the Care Not Cash program, which includes medical and social services in addition to housing. New sites in the Tenderloin and South of Market seem sure to be earmarked and approved for affordable housing, breaking a stagnation caused by dried-up federal, state and, more recently, local funds.

"We'll have the ability to go after projects if the bond passes," says Barbara Gualco, associate director of Mercy Housing. "I've had brokers calling and I have had to turn them down. Currently, there are very limited affordable housing dollars."

Mercy was one of the nonprofits that

tapped into the city's last successful affordable housing bond, in 1996, when voters approved \$100 million. It enabled Mercy to build the six-story, 93-unit Presentation Senior Community at Taylor and Ellis, completed in 2001.

In recent months, Gualco says, Mercy has kept its leads warm on a list not quite a dozen names long.

"We do have relationships with sellers so (sites) don't get snapped up," Gualco said. "These are sellers that don't have to sell right away and they are waiting in the wings until there are acquisition funds and pre-development money. It would be great to get some of them. We would look at city-owned sites, too. Homeless housing is now the focus."

"But if we're to address this issue, it's important to be building in areas throughout the city that aren't redevelopment areas."

With Prop. A. passage, insiders guess that bond funds would be ready in a year. But Matt Franklin of the Mayor's Office of Housing says the city is prepared to move a lot faster.

"We can send out requests for proposals to the public in six months, maybe sooner," Franklin said. "We're ready to go. We'll make 20% of the funds available each year for five years, and proportionately at all levels – supportive housing, rental, construction and down payment. The city recognizes that we have a severe crisis."

The Department of Human Services, which oversees Care Not Cash, is developing strategies to land more money for supportive housing – from federal to private donations, according to Trent Rohrer, DHS executive director. The recent completion of a *San Francisco Plan to Abolish Homelessness* by the mayor's Commission on Homelessness, coupled with Prop. A. passage, puts the city in line

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