

# Urban Solutions' 'living document' of TL

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

URBAN Solutions staffers have been checking in regularly with the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative since May, giving progress reports on their neighborhood mapping project and trying to calm concerns that the survey might be the first step toward turning the Tenderloin into a redevelopment area.

In November, Urban Solutions Planning Manager Peter Cohen called the report "a baseline for community planning, an archive of the neighborhood showing changes over time."

Staffer Jamie Cutlip walked the group through a PowerPoint sampling of the report's 17 tables and 42 maps of the area's demographics, land use and commercial activity, including a breakdown of 932 ground-floor establishments into 34 business types. The chart lists 34 drinking places and 13 liquor stores, but doesn't specify whether the 185 eating places and 56 food stores also serve or sell liquor.

A few hackles rose.

"Are you telling us that you haven't mapped the all liquor-selling businesses?" asked resident David Baker, newly elected president of the North of Market Planning Coalition. "This is an extremely important issue to the neighborhood."

Cutlip said that to get that information, Urban Solutions would have to do research that was beyond the scope of the project, which Cohen later told *The Extra* had been funded by private foundations plus lots of in-kind from Urban Solutions staff. The field data were collected over four months by staff, interns and volunteers who walked the study area — Market to Post, Powell to Van Ness — then integrated that information with Census Bureau stats.

Baker asked Cohen if the data analysis had been made available to Muni as it was contemplating bus route changes, especially on Geary. Told that it had been, but just recently, Baker asked, "A little late, isn't it?"

Still, TFC members seemed impressed by

the presentation and looked forward to getting their hands on copies of the report. Cohen said it would be available within weeks and would be up on Urban Solutions' Web site as a pdf as soon as possible thereafter.

Next meeting, Cohen came with three copies of the colorful, 54-page, spiral-bound *Tenderloin Neighborhood Profile*. Cohen said there was enough in the project budget to print 100 copies, "not enough for everyone in the Tenderloin to get a copy, but one for all the service organizations and for active people like you."

"Last month, you came here and told us to just call, and we could get a copy," Baker huffed.

"The copies cost \$25 each," Cohen explained.

The report introduction says the agency plans to update the neighborhood profile annually and calls it "a living document."

A couple of interesting findings from the report: While San Francisco's population as a whole stayed relatively flat between 1990 and 2000, increasing only 7%, the Tenderloin's population jumped 17%.

A chart that tracks how much education adults over 25 completed shows that 15% of TL residents didn't attend high school, compared with 10% of residents citywide. Only 26% of neighborhood people got an undergraduate degree or had some graduate schooling, compared to 45% citywide. But in three other categories — some high school, high school diploma and some college — Tenderloin residents exceeded the city averages.

The Tenderloin report is the first of a series Urban Solutions is publishing. A SoMa report is ready to roll off the presses, and reports on southeastern neighborhoods are in the works, Cohen said.

## EXCESSIVE ENTHUSIASM

Hold a most-studied-neighborhood-in-San Francisco contest, and the Tenderloin probably would win, hands down. In November, TFC also heard a presentation from The Berkeley Group. Last year, TNDC

commissioned this volunteer consulting organization of U.C. Berkeley students to evaluate the feasibility of having a farmers' market somewhere in the heart of the Tenderloin and to study how it might affect existing businesses.

TNDC's Jerry Jai explained that the commission was an attempt to tackle the TL's "lack of an affordable grocery," a problem he'd been hearing about since he came on board the agency last year.

"We don't have any plans to implement the findings of the survey," Jai said. "It was done more to contribute to the knowledge of the neighborhood." He introduced the four young Berkeley Groupers making the presentation and let them have at it.

They made their points with the brashness — and awkwardness — of youth: They'd mailed 1,500 questionnaires to TNDC residents, and of the 72 who responded, 13% said they shop daily, 40% at least once a week. They spend \$1,600 a year on produce. About a third shop at Safeway, the rest at local mom-and-pops.

The group recommended a weekly market of up to five vendors to be held in Cohen Alley — the most viable of the three locations they'd considered. The other two were Boeddeker Park, which they found to be "too small and too dangerous," and the Federal Building Plaza, which was "too far away." One alternative to the proposed market was improving transportation for residents who want to get to the twice-a-week Heart of the City Farmers Market in the Civic Center.

"Nice presentation," Baker deadpanned. "I hate to rain on your parade, but I doubt you could sell this concept to anyone, not with the Heart of the City being the premier market in our neighborhood."

Lynn Valente, associate director of the Market Street Association and staunch supporter of the Civic Center farmers' market, fairly exploded at the young people: "It sounds to me like you're reinventing the wheel, and I hate that. If we need more outreach to the community about what's already here, just call me. I'll make it happen." ■

## GOOD NEWS for...

**FAMILIES IN THE TL** They'll start moving in by the end of December, the lucky families that made the cut for Asian Inc.'s newest affordable housing venture at 421 Turk — 21 three- to five-bedroom apartments with rents ranging from \$596 to \$1,239. Tenants are a mix of Section 8 folks from the S.F. Housing Authority's waiting list and non-Section 8 applicants who were selected by lottery last June. Tom Dapice, Asian Inc.'s housing specialist, says all the units are filled, there's a "substantial" waiting list and applicants' household incomes must fall below specified limits. For more information or to get on the list, contact Phoung Thai at Asian Inc., 926-5910.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

**ALEXANDER RESIDENCE TENANTS** It was mostly good news at 230 Eddy — 23 long months of rehab had brought the 179-unit Alexander upgraded electricity, fire alarms, sprinklers, emergency and intercom systems; spruced-up rooms throughout; 18 wheelchair-accessible units; and a new multipurpose room. The place was shining Nov. 17 when TNDC and S.F. Redevelopment Agency, which jointly bought the



PHOTO BY MICHAEL NULTY

Alexander in 2000, threw a big reopening bash, with food, speeches and three rooms open for inspection. In one, Aurora Meek showed off her remodeled bathroom, which now can accommodate her wheelchair. "I was the first Filipina in the Alexander," she told *The Extra* proudly. "I've lived here 22 years." Supe Chris Daly presented a Certificate of Honor to the residents, 200 of whom are members of the Alexander Tenants' Association, a nonprofit that formed to ensure that the building would be preserved as affordable housing for low-income seniors and the disabled. Daly also held up a T-shirt that TNDC gave tenants for the occasion and that many were wearing. "I survived the renovation of the Alexander Residence," it said on the back. That's a reference to the not-so-good news, according to Tenants Association member Michael Nulty: A third of the Alexanderites couldn't take the almost two years of renovation chaos and moved out.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

**TENDERLOIN SERVICE PROVIDERS** Hands On Bay Area, an education and volunteer service organization, recently graduated 16 young working adults from

a first-ever nine-month study group on homelessness in the Tenderloin. The participants logged 1,500 weekend hours attached to Hospitality House, Larkin Street Youth Services, St. Anthony's, St. Boniface and more. They served food and assembled clean needle kits, put together panel discussions with neighborhood spokesmen and collected mountains of data. The experience was "eye-opening," said Gap employee Jeff Green at the final meeting, Nov. 13 at 111 Jones. Others felt it had diminished their fears about homelessness and humanized the issue. The majority vowed to return to the TL as volunteers immediately and voted for a repeat program. Throughout, they had been profoundly impressed with service providers' "compassion" and responsiveness to clients. "Now, I have confidence I can learn about any organization here," said Dana Stall. Hands On Bay Area, headquartered in San Francisco (541-9616), is an affiliate of the national Hands On Network.

— TOM CARTER

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— TOM CARTER

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