

Landlord pulls plug on Mason Street pot club

Dispensary mainly serves residents of Tenderloin SROs

BY TOM CARTER

MEGA-LANDLORD CitiApartments withdrew its support of a license for a Mason Street marijuana dispensary in one of its buildings, claiming it hadn't known the pot club even existed, although the landlord had signed off on it.

The Planning Commission was set to approve the application for the 120-24 Mason Street Dispensary when the application was pulled after Planning received a letter dated May 4 from the landlord's lawyer saying the pot club was unauthorized.

But the dispensary's owner, Tariq Alazraie of Café.com, asked the commission on May 17 to instead hold the application in abeyance to give him time to try to change the landlord's mind — and he was hoping to avoid paying another \$6,691 for a new application fee. The commission complied.

CitiApartments, also known as Skyline Realty, is the empire of 89-year-old, Mission District-born Frank Lembi. Skyline owns about 150 buildings all over the city, mostly apartments, also including eight hotels and a couple of office buildings. The city attorney sued Skyline and CitiApartments in August allegedly for illegally converting residential hotel rooms at the Gaylord Hotel, four blocks from the dispensary, into tourist rooms after intimidating tenants to vacate, then charging four times the rental rate, breaking multiple state and local laws.

In 2005, the Board of Supervisors passed tough rules to control the growth spurt of pot clubs. More than 30 previously licensed dispensaries must reapply to the commission before June 30 if they want to stay open. The first to apply, Green Cross, was turned down for a dis-

"The large hotels don't feel comfortable with a dispensary. They are pressuring our landlord."

Tariq Alazraie
POT CLUB OWNER

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Owner Tariq Alazraie is inside Café.com with the window to the dispensary in the rear.

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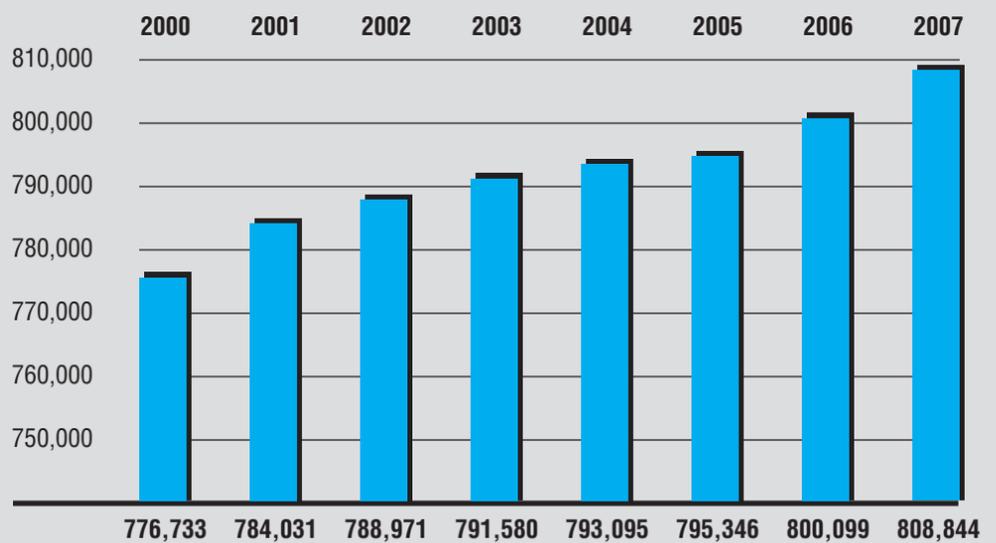
CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

CALIFORNIA'S COUNT

SAN FRANCISCO POPULATION GROWTH



Source: California Department of Finance

The state keeps track of each county's population and annually reports the change.

Pop. 808,844

S.F. still growing and U.S. census starting to adjust

BY TOM CARTER

THE California Department of Finance estimates that San Francisco has a record 808,844 population and has been growing steadily since 2000. At the same time, the U.S. census has been showing shrinking numbers — 50,000 or more each year since 2004, saddling San Francisco with the image of a major city on the decline like Boston.

So who's right?

Neither the state nor the U.S. census staff wants to claim victory. But in 2000 the state started with the feds' count of 776,733 people in San Francisco and made its annual estimates, county by county, using many different ways to calculate the comings and goings of the populace. The state's more meticulous system suggests its number-crunching is closer to reality.

For sure, San Francisco is no longer shrinking. Even the feds, as of June 1, now seem to agree. After meeting with the state's demographic experts in November, the census folks reversed their string of five declining estimates and pegged San Francisco's population at 744,041, up from 739,426 where it had bottomed out the year before. (See graph on P. 4.)

Outside a Mission district political rally

on June 2, Mayor Gavin Newsom was asked if he knew the city's population. He shot back:

"No one does. There are about five different figures floating around — 746,000 is one — but there's not one figure everyone agrees on."

"Would it surprise you to hear the population is 809,000?" the reporter asked.

"No."

Newsom was shaking hands outside before going into the Women's Building auditorium on 18th Street to attend a rally for District Attorney Kamala Harris. The Central City Extra explained that the figure came from the California Department of Finance.

"It's the old census numbers that are contradicted," Newsom said. "I always say it's between 750,000 and 800,000. Now you've added another number. And I'm going to quote you." He added with a grin, "I like the higher numbers. I never did subscribe to the decline." Then he turned and went inside.

Wide disparities concern both the state and the feds, especially the gap in California's population. The Finance Department has California at 37.7 million, 1.2 million more than the U.S. census.

Finance and census staffs began meeting last November to discuss this embarrassment. Comparing the complicated methodologies will lead to changes, state sources say. It will save some professional face and get federal funding streams — that include state population in their formulas — on a more accurate track.

A range of implications accompanies an accurate population count, from how peo-

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