

Big battle over 'ground zero' liquor license

Grand Liquors hit in gentrification of city art district

BY TOM CARTER

GRAND Liquors Market is the first major casualty of the gritty Taylor Street corridor's gentrification as an art district from Market Street to Ellis. Storeowner Karim Rantisi has lost his lease, and angry activists want his liquor license to vanish, too.

The fear and loathing over the notorious, crime-ridden corner that the moribund Grand Liquors occupies at Turk and Taylor has escalated to rabid opposition even to the nearby store where Rantisi plans to move.

Rantisi has gambled big on his new Tip Top Market at 90 Turk St. He says he wants to reinvent himself. Respected as he is for enduring 17 years in the crime-pocked, skid

row milieu — and trying to be a good neighbor in the hood — he's the underdog in his fight for a new beginning.

Rantisi wants to transfer his liquor license from 67 Taylor St. to 90 Turk and vows to get rid of the cheap stuff he now

sells to drinkers who need whatever pocket change can buy. The new market is more than twice the size of Grand Liquors and would feature fresh meats and produce, slushies, 15 kinds of coffee, hot chocolate, ice cream and good wines.

The opposition says go somewhere else, there's too much booze being sold on that block now. TL Capt. Gary Jimenez calls the area "ground zero for violence, a killing field."

The block containing 90 Turk — a former video porn business — is such a bad scene it's scary. The former manager of the Aranda Hotel, an SRO in the middle of the block, once called it the most dangerous block in the city. The area around the SRO is the frequent site of beatings, knifings and occasional shootings. Crowds mill about aimlessly on the sidewalk day and night. At 48

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EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

'HOW ARE YOU DOING?'



PHOTO BY SARA KWAN

"Im doing fantastically fine rite now but I dont know bout next mnth. I went in 2 my situation before the economy took a dive so its not affecting me so much now. But it seems like Im paying twice as much 4 what I need compared to before."

— Johnny Martine, "The Cowboy," Manor House Restaurant

Tenderloin twitter

Man-on-the-street interviews tell mood of the hood

THE world seems all atwitter about Twitter. This social network Website, launched in San Francisco three years ago, is the smallest but the fastest-growing among MySpace, Facebook and other such sites.

According to a Nielsen survey, from February 2008 to February 2009, Twitter grew 1,382%, from 475,000 users to 7,038,000. By mid-April, the numbers had doubled, to 14 million. And, apparently, it's got at least a million applications, to wit:

Mayor Newsom used Twitter to announce his candidacy for governor, and CNN transmits breaking news via Twitter. Surgeons at a Detroit hospital twittered throughout a brain tumor operation so residents could follow the progress and ask questions. NASA used Twitter to send Mars Phoenix Lander program updates. And, for the first-ever Tweet-cast concert, local group Moonalice had its April 3 gig at Slim's digitized into an MP3, then posted a link to the MP3 on Twitter so

fans at home could experience the performance live.

Celebrities perch on Twitter to update fans on their whereabouts. Newsom's gubernatorial tweet reportedly reached all 270,000 of his Twitter "followers," as they're known in Twitertalk. Actor Ashton Kutcher claims he's the first Twitterer to reach one million users, and even NBA star Shaquille O'Neal has more than 800,000 such hangers-on.

So Central City Extra figured we'd get with it, and go out into the hood and get some short and sweet commentary — not by cell, but more normal ask-and-tell. But instead of asking Twitter's lone query, "What are you doing," The Extra's interviewers wanted to know, "How are you doing?" in hopes of getting a snapshot of the neighborhood's mood these days. We translated their comments into Twitertalk; usually we gave them more than the requisite 140 characters to make their point.

We started at Manor House Restaurant, where owner Mimi Yee says business has dwindled but dedicated locals keep coming. ■

PHOTOS, INTERVIEWS AND TWITTERTALK TRANSLATIONS BY SARA KWAN WITH MARJORIE BEGGS AND HEIDI SWILLINGER

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PHOTO BY SARA KWAN

Karim Rantisi faces fierce opposition to transferring his liquor license.