

# Doubling of Central Market CBD in home stretch

## City mails yes-or-no ballots to owners of 816 SoMa properties

By JONATHAN NEWMAN

**T**HE CENTRAL MARKET CBD'S expansive future went out in the mail as a ballot sent by the Department of Elections on June 7, polling owners of 816 parcels stretching along Market and Mission streets past 11th and down Sixth to Folsom and adjacent western SoMa blocks.

The Board of Supervisors three days earlier had unanimously approved a formal Resolution of Intention, submitted by District 6 Supervisor Jane Kim, to enable the Central Market Community Benefit District to double in size. The ballot asks the property owner a simple yes or no: "I approve (or do not approve) the proposed annual assessment on the parcel identified in this ballot, and I understand that my assessment could be subject to the inflation adjustment formula."

For the CBD to expand, a majority of those voting must agree and that majority must represent at least 50% of the total value of the proposed assessments.

While the ballot is simple, the process leading up to the vote has taken more than a year and the methods used to compute individual assessments on properties relies on a 98-page engineers' report of considerable complexity.

When founded in 2006, Central Market CBD's assessments were set by a multiplier applied to a property's sidewalk frontage, lot and building square footage. The resulting number was weighed against land use — non-profit-owned buildings and vacant lots were assessed less than commercial structures. Since then, according to Jim Chappell of MJM Management, consultants to the CBD, the art of determining assessment formulas has evolved. That makes Central Market CBD's the Jackson Pollock of community benefit district assessment formulas, a masterpiece of interlocking calculations and point systems so complex it's almost



PHOTO BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

**Lowest assessment** would be \$24,720 for this duplex on Laskie Street.

impossible to describe.

It was developed by a statewide committee of assessments engineers, city attorneys and other experts who regularly come up with best practices for assessment districts for the state Senate. A new benefits point system is their latest recommendation, and Central Market used it to determine how much which property owners would be asked to pay.

Here's how the new assessment methods work. Central Market proposes two categories of services to property owners: Cleaning and public safety and economic and marketing. Cleaning means street cleaning, graffiti removal, community guides, plus one cop and some officers for special events like street fairs. Economic and marketing consists mainly of advocacy for the district with city officials and grant writing for street beautification, as determined by Executive Director Daniel Hurtado.

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PHOTO BY LISE STAMPFLI

**Highest assessment** if the district expands would be levied at \$30,684.97 for a former Marshalls building that will house the new Nordstrom Rack.

### CBD assessment formula simplified — sort of

How much property owners pay to be part of the Central Market CBD will be based on an assessment formula fascinating for its complexity.

The CBD assigns a benefit point for each property, ranging from zero to 2. Commercial properties are assigned 2 for cleaning and public safety and 1 for marketing and economic services. Residential properties are assigned .75 and zero in those respective categories.

Next, the CBD multiplies the linear street footage of the property by the assigned benefit point, divides the lot size by 2,500 — a "standard" San Francisco commercial lot size — then multiplies that number by the assigned benefit point, repeats the process for the building size, adds the resulting three numbers, the sum of which is then multiplied by \$21.53 to determine the property's yearly bill for sanitation and safety.

To determine the assessment for economic and marketing services, the CBD omits the linear street footage of the property, but repeats all other steps and multiplies the resulting number by \$41.21.

Finally, the CBD adds the number for cleaning and public safety services to the number for economic and marketing services and — viola — sets the annual assessment for each parcel.

A careful reading of the CBD's 49-page management plan and the detailed 98 pages of the engineer's report fails to turn up any mention that a property owner should take two aspirin and call an accountant in the morning. ■ — J.N.

# A blow to Central Y

## 2 major partners pull back on deal

By MARJORIE BEGGS

**C**ENTRAL YMCA members and advocates for a new neighborhood Y — waiting eight years for it to materialize — were blown away by the bombshell announced at the May Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting: Speaking for the Bay Area YMCA Association, Chip Rich, vice president of operations, said he believes it's no longer feasible to build a new Y at a lot next to UC Hastings' parking garage at Golden Gate and Larkin. At the same meeting, Hastings CFO David Seward said the law school — the lot's owner and formerly a strong partner in a proposed joint venture — had decided to begin considering other options, such as student housing, for the property.

Rich and Seward told The Extra later in separate interviews that they'd met before the Collaborative meeting and decided to make their announcements. Both said it was "mutual." Neither would say his institution was closing the door on a new Central Y to replace the 100-plus-year-old facility at 220 Golden Gate Ave. that was shuttered in 2005 and sold in 2007 — only that the Y was unlikely to be built on Hastings' paved, 12,000-square-foot lot.

Since 2009, Central has been using the lot for a demonstration garden, basketball games and other outdoor activities and leasing ground-floor space in the garage. The temporary site — a few offices, small fitness center and meeting room with a kitchen — is a less-than-ideal community center and poles away from the huge, much-loved old YMCA that was deemed too large and decrepit to renovate. (It's now the beautifully restored, TNDC-owned Kelly Cullen Community, 172 studio units for the formerly homeless.)

Last year, Kasey Asberry, former Central employee and now volunteer garden project coordinator, began leading a cadre trying to kick-start the dormant plans for a new Y. They felt the association and Hastings were not honoring the commitment they made to the community when the old Y closed. Within days of the Collaborative meeting, Asberry began circulating an email to supporters with an attached flyer, featuring the logo of the Shih Yu-Lang Central YMCA and the message, "Are you ready to see this beacon turned off in the Tenderloin forever?"

The 2008 recession has taken the brunt of blame for delays of a new Central. Charles Collins, CEO of Central's parent Bay Area YMCA, said in October

the association had to be more careful with its assets. "Commitment [to this project] doesn't equal capital," he told The Extra.

Seward said then that Hastings still supported a new Y, but with staff layoffs and declining enrollment, the school's "appetite for risk and debt definitely is less than when we started this joint project."

The temporary Y site felt the economic pinch, too, with program hours cut and 25% of personnel axed. In 2011, Carmella Gold was let go after 18 years as executive director and two years as director of capital planning.

"And perhaps you heard," Asberry emailed The Extra recently, "Greg Moore, our longtime senior director and membership director, was fired in the midst of our fundraising campaign."

The YMCA signed a five-year lease with Hastings for its temporary space at 387 Golden Gate Ave., and has a five-year option starting in December 2014.

Seward says he was "not happy" making the Collaborative announcement, but "institutionally, it's become evident that further delaying a decision for the lot won't benefit us. As much as we still support the idea of a new Y, we are a law school and have a commitment to keeping it viable."

Seward wouldn't recommend selling the lot, he says. Student housing is "our best option" for the site now. It would add to the "campus feel" of the neighborhood and, with a long student waiting list for its 252 studios and apartments at 100 McAllister St., is potential-

ly self-supporting.

Rich says that the Bay Area YMCA, for its part, "has not given up on the idea of a new Y for the community. The door is definitely not closed." But the association does recognize that Hastings' relationship to the Central Y has shifted, coloring the association's certainty of building a new facility in partnership with the law school.

"What we see is that the exclusivity is gone," Rich said. "Hastings is in a softer position now than before the recession."

The association has made no promises to Y advocates about next steps, but Rich insists that whatever it does will be in the neighborhood's interests.

"Want to reiterate: Our big desire is to look at unmet needs, especially of seniors and youth," Rich said. "We believe the Y should be in a partnership with other community organizations — partners financially, but also for space considerations. Maybe we'd put in startup funds and assume others would share [the costs] with us."

Asberry isn't waiting for an association move. She's asked Supervisors Jane Kim and David Chiu to publicly support a new Y, but so far to no avail. "I sense they're waiting to be pushed, to see if there's a groundswell," Asberry says.

She's pinning hopes on a six-month feasibility study proposed by Elvin Padilla, former director of Tenderloin Economic Development Project and a

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