

experience, there is faster turnaround.”

Thus far, \$29,000 in grants for architectural services has been disbursed and \$19,595 in forgivable loans for construction, for a total of \$48,595. That's about 7% of the total available for loans. But it's low mainly because construction costs are reimbursed, and most of the construction is under way or about to begin. The amount forgiven will jump in the next couple of months, according to Jenny McNulty, Urban Solutions deputy director.

The Tenant Improvement package is a bigger offering than the façade deal and pretty alluring. An owner of vacant commercial space on Sixth Street who is looking to renovate to attract a retail client can qualify for funds used for demolition, floor coverings, wall finishes, ceilings, equipment, cabinetry, plumbing, ventilations, electrical and other needed work.

Forgivable loans up to \$25,500 carry a one-to-two match, meaning an owner who puts in \$51,000 gets \$25,500 free. Plus \$5,000 worth of free design assistance.

Even that much free money is a hard sell on skid row. Gordon has had a tough row to hoe, trying to sell a rosy future in an area that doesn't smell anything like a rose garden.

“People have to want to believe things will get better,” Gordon says. “But people don't want to be the only one doing it (making improvements).”

First in line was the Speed Queen Coin Laundry at 118 Sixth, which in the early days of the state lottery was a bustling, if funky, concern. (But it is known by its outside sign: Launderland Coin-Op Wash & Dry.) The Tito family, which has owned the business for 30 years, had long contemplated major renovations. When Six on Sixth came along, the family replaced its inventory with quality washers and dryers, put in a new floor and remodeled. Urban Solutions administered its tenant improvement loan for a new boiler and a facade improvement loan to make over the front. Now the place sparkles, and Gody Tito says “50% more people” are coming in.

“We were the first ones to start,” she says. “Us and the Delta Hotel. SoMa is using us as guinea pigs.”

Others to avail themselves of facade loans and complete the projects are Sixth Street Books at 144 Sixth and G Squared, a hair salon near Folsom.

Even Vijay Patel — who owns the four



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**Work is proceeding at Tu Lan, which is closed temporarily.**

retail spaces that for 15 years have lain musty and fallow behind an unsightly wood wall on the ground floor of the Alder Hotel, itself an eyesore — wants to meet with an architect to see how the space can be reclaimed, utilized and rented, Gordon said.

Of course there now is plenty of brand new, inviting retail space that is trying to catch an eye. The finely renovated SRO Dudley Hotel at Sixth and Natoma sports a handsome area with a bank of large windows facing the sidewalk. This pristine shell could easily accommodate a restaurant or a dollar store.

The Delta Hotel, at Mission, site of the Bayanihan Cultural Center, has an equally alluring 1,400-square-foot ground space that two Filipino restaurateurs are eyeing. Ed Quiambao and Barry Picazo perked up their ears when the center informed them of it last year. Now they want to put in an 80-seat Mango Bay restaurant, named after Picazo's place at Third and Mission featured in *7 by 7* magazine recently.

“Filipino restaurants need a presence in San Francisco,” Picazo says. “They're all in Daly City! We'd want this to be lunch and dinner and on weekends we'd stay open until 3 or 4 a.m.”

A German bakery and a secondhand store, aware of changes in the offing, also have shown interest in locating on Sixth, Gordon said. Over the next 15 months, the Department of Public Works and Redevelopment will widen the sidewalks 1½ feet from Market to Howard, put in trees and install antique street lamps like the ones found around City Hall. It is part of a five-year, \$5 million improvement program, the Howard to Harrison section having recently been completed. Meantime, Urban Solutions will go to the Redevelopment Agency Commission this month, seeking to extend the loan program through the summer.

“We expect a lot of physical improvements by summer,” Gordon said, “new tile work, facade cleaning and a lot of leasing activity involving small businesses as we move south toward Howard Street.” ■

## \$700,000 for hotel rehab goes begging

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upgrades, for example, the tenants would be rid of frequent power failures and the owners would increase the property's value and reduce fire risks. All on the city's dime. (The quality-of-life loan is forgivable, meaning it doesn't have to be repaid, if the owner adheres to city guidelines for affordable rents. Code compliance loans, such as for fire sprinklers, are interest-free.)

When asked what to make of the stagnation, Shaw couldn't hide his frustration.

“This program is so slow to produce the benefits it was designed for,” he said. “It takes forever, and there's no reason for these delays. It's unfortunate. It's a lack of priority by staff for not pushing it.”

But there seemed to be some confusion about just what and what was not communicated about the hibernating loan applications.

Told that none of the 15 applications had been approved, Henry Kamilowicz, owner of the Sharon Hotel at 226 Sixth, said, “That's brand new to me. I need to get on top of it. I will call Jeff White next week and ask him about it. I was told this was a piece of cake.”

Kamilowicz is secretary of the Independent Hotel Operators and Owners Association and has three applications on file. He had heartily favored the project.

“I've been trying to get people on board,” he said. “But it's too much paperwork for some of them. There are not many of the Indian owners into this. Rent is all they are interested in.”

“But this is about quality of life for everyone. That's important. This will (lead to) a better place to live, better people and a better neighborhood. And I don't get a nickel out of this. But I care about San Francisco. And I want it to be like the great cities I have seen around the world.”

Sam Patel, president of the same operators and owners group, said he had contacted all of the owners who had filed applications. He said he had no idea why this was “dragging on,” unless it was because of the “holidays and some owners being out of the country.”

“I have been on their case and there's no reason for this procrastination,” Patel told *The Extra*. “They should be putting their packages together in the next couple of weeks. I contacted everybody and offered to help them out, to coordinate everything and get it to Jeff (White). We're working as a group. It is to everyone's benefit to get it going.”

White said 10 of the 15 applications are from Sixth Street hotels and they will receive top priority. When all are finally completed, Redevelopment will hire a part-time consultant to administer the loans.

Going back to the Redevelopment Commission in July empty-handed, or with only a few hotel loans in hand, was not a scenario that White relished. Would the unclaimed money then be lost to Sixth Street hotels and offered to others? Would the money find another project?

“I don't know how that would play,” White said. “But the applications show good faith. This is a process and we're on a learning curve. This has a lot of potential for the tenants who live (in the hotels). But all sides win. It's an opportunity for impact.” ■

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