

Mid-Market merchants rip city's ban on private cars

Hasn't helped
business, they say

BY DANIEL POWELL
AND GEOFF LINK

THE mayor and supervisors recently applied a variety of Band-Aids to Market Street's festering midsection:

- Eastbound cars were restricted from 10th to Sixth streets starting Sept. 29.

- In October, 11 empty storefronts were dressed up with art so they don't look so forlorn.

- Green Pods — Greenery is used to extend a store or restaurant onto the sidewalk to enliven the street scene.

It's all an effort to revitalize the street, Timothy Papandreou, assistant deputy director of the Municipal Transportation Agency, told a group of Market Street merchants last month, to make it "the premier street for San Francisco."

City officials want Market Street to become a European-style boulevard with light, calm vehicular traffic, mostly bicycles, with an outdoor culture geared around cafe and restaurant patio dining, all to happen by 2013 when Market Street is to be repaved from Van Ness to Embarcadero.

"The biggest challenge besides the homeless is parking."

Al Choi

MANAGER, PIPER'S JEWELERS

"We are creating a body of knowledge as we prepare for the repaving of Market Street," Papandreou said.

So far, at least this much has been learned:

- Green Pods — Market Street Grill (1231 Market St.) was first and is still the only Green Pod venue, though "an art school and an art-oriented store" are planning to go Green Pod, the merchants meeting was told by Astrid Haryati, the mayor's office greening director.

- Art in Storefronts — The effort is intended to "quickly transform the face of properties to make them available for leasing," Haryati told the meeting. No leases were reported by mid-December.

- Traffic Calming — 130 fewer vehicles an hour east of Eighth Street, about half the normal flow; traffic on Mission Street increased 15%; Muni gained 50 seconds from Eighth to Fifth. Before the study, bicycles made up 60% of the traffic, during the study 75%.

Eastbound cars have the discretion to turn off Market at Tenth but must turn at Eighth or Sixth. Three parking officers are stationed at Eighth and one or two at Sixth. After the officers leave, many vehicles violate the ban, the study found.

The effort hasn't been without speed bumps. Jason Hailey, an artist hired by the city to paint a 100-foot-long mural across the front of the old Hollywood Billiards building, was stabbed during a robbery attempt on his paints. And some mid-Market merchants are angry at the city for what they feel is an unasked-for role in an experiment

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CENTRAL CITY

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HOW THE OTHER 7% LIVE



PHOTOS BY MARJORIE BEGGS

The food line at Tenderloin Self Help Center's weekly pantry stretches for half a block up Turk Street to Leavenworth.

TWO BAGS FULL

Food Bank pantries
each week feed
22,000 households

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

On a chilly morning in mid-November, Maria Cecilia Bautista was first in line for the food pantry at Bessie Carmichael School. Behind her were 60 other parents eager for the weekly giveaway to begin.

"I have two children, so this really

helps," she said. "It's very important to my family."

When Anna Colindres, the school's volunteer pantry coordinator, signaled the opening of the pantry at 8:30 a.m., Bautista began moving along the tables, smiling as she filled two shopping bags with the bounty: green apples, celery, small red yams, onions, white potatoes, canned peas and green beans, chicken broth, bottles of fruit juice, chicken gravy mix. And there were special treats because of the coming holiday: a frozen whole chicken — any meat is a rarity at the pantry — and a few chocolate truffles. With care, she could make the food last for a couple of meals, she said.

Bautista has been coming to this South of Market pantry for two years, though she has a job and so does her husband, making their family part of alarming nationwide statistics. The USDA — which has renamed hunger "food insecurity" — says that in 2008, 49 million people, 17 million of them children, didn't have enough to eat, and today's still-sour economy will make 2009's tallies even worse.

"Food banks tend to be the canaries in the coal mine of the national economy," said JC Dwyer, with the Texas Food Bank, interviewed for a recent PBS "NewsHour" segment on hunger in America. "It's absolutely tied to the recession. Food banks" — there are 200 nationwide — "are seeing a 30% increase [in requests]."

By 9:15 a.m., the food was gone. Colindres said lines topped out at 50 people last year. She's not surprised that the number keeps rising.

Bessie Carmichael is one of the San Francisco Food Bank's 200 food pantries,



Beautiful, healthy produce makes up half the food distributed at city pantries.

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