INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency Commissioners
FROM: Fred Blackwell, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Media Clippings from 9.1.10 to 9.15.10

Enclosed is a collection of newspaper and media clippings that refer to the Redevelopment Agency or an Agency-related project or program.

(Originated by Gia Casteel-Brown, Executive Assistant)

Fred Blackwell
Executive Director

MISSION BAY:
Attachment 2: SAN FRANCISCO Business Times: “UC Regents approve breaking ground on UCSF’s $1.5 billion Mission Bay hospital”, September 16, 2010

YERBA BUENA:

SOMA & TRANSBAY:
Attachment 6: **SAN FRANCISCO Business Times**: “Terminal clogs local lavatories”, September 5, 2010

**BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT; HUNTERS POINT SHIPYARD:**


**REDEVELOPMENT NEWS:**

Attachment 8: sfexaminer.com: “Civic group keeps focus on Mid-Market cleanup,” September 1, 2010

Attachment 9: sfexaminer.com: “Is money from redevelopments a valuable tool or a slush fund?” September 9, 2010

Attachment 10: City Hall Press Release: “Mayor Gavin Newsom hails approval of Cityplace Project to Mid-Market renewal, economic revitalization, September 14, 2010

Attachment 11: sfexaminer.com: “Mid-Market mall plan clears another hurdle,” September 15, 2010

Attachment 12: sfexaminer.com: “Displaced residents to see funds,” September 1, 2010

Tech ventures attracting cash

By Erin Sherbert
Examiner Staff Writer

A shift in the distribution of venture capital dollars has San Francisco significantly outpacing its South Bay competitors and buying key industries during the economic downturn.

In the past three months, 22 software companies received investment money in San Francisco, compared with seven in San Mateo and three in Mountain View, the home of Internet powerhouse Google Inc.

Likewise, four of San Francisco's clean-tech companies received venture capital dollars during the second quarter compared to one in Mountain View and one in Palo Alto, according to economic reports.

"This is a new trend," said Ted Egan, chief economist for San Francisco. "High-tech is thought of being a South Bay thing, but I am hopeful that we are the leader." 

Investors poured nearly $8 billion into Bay Area companies in the past three months — a 160 percent increase from the first quarter. More than $288 million went to San Francisco green-tech, software and biotech firms, elevating the City's position in the innovation industry.

The increasing flow of money into San Francisco is directly tied to The City's booming market for new social-media and gaming companies, drawing on its diverse and more youthful talent pool, Egan said. That, along with the targeted development of the Mission Bay neighborhood, has influenced more companies — and thus more venture capital — to come to San Francisco. 

Venture capital investment has helped Recurve, a local green-building company, grow by nearly 50 percent in the past year.

"I didn't anticipate we'd see that increase," said Matt Golden, president of Recurve, which recently secured $8 million in capital. The upward trend has helped buoy San Francisco as it struggles to recover from the recession. Although San Francisco shed an estimated 40,000 jobs during the past two years, the software industry alone added more than 800 jobs during the recession.

However, nobody is banking on this injection of money reversing San Francisco's 87 percent unemployment rate — at least not immediately, said Jim Lazarus, vice president of public policy for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.

Traditionally, startup companies are not huge job generators, but they do build upon themselves, which creates a cumulative effect on the economy, Lazarus said. This will definitely put San Francisco on a more competitive edge with areas like the South Bay, which has historically been the high-tech hot spot.

"Startups want to be where other startups are," Lazarus said. "You find us competing with the Bishop Ranch and San Ramon of the world and the Santa Clara of the world."
UC Regents approve breaking ground on UCSF’s $1.5 billion Mission Bay hospital

San Francisco Business Times - by Chris Rauber

The Regents of the University of California voted Thursday to approve construction of a new $1.52 billion women’s, children’s, and cancer specialty hospital at UC San Francisco’s burgeoning Mission Bay campus.

The Regents unanimously approved going ahead with the 289-bed hospital in their Sept. 16 board meeting at the Rutter Center in Mission Bay. Plans now call for breaking ground on the 878,000-square-foot hospital project in December. Officials say it will be the first new hospital to be built in San Francisco in decades.

UCSF Chancellor Susan Desmond-Hellmann, M.D., said in a Sept. 16 statement that the Regents’ vote is “a major milestone for UCSF.”

“It is hard to overstate the importance of the new Medical Center at Mission Bay, which will reinforce UCSF and the entire Bay Area as a hub of innovation, biotechnology and premier health care,” Desmond-Hellmann said.

The new hospital, adjacent to UCSF’s fast-growing biomedical research campus at Mission Bay on a 14.5-acre parcel, is expected to speed the application of research discoveries from lab bench to patient bedside. And it’s slated to open by 2014 -- a tight time frame in the hospital construction world.

UCSF boasted in June that the new hospital and nearby research facilities could be the “tipping point” that helps establish San Francisco as a full-fledged health care hub like Cleveland or Pittsburgh, where health-related businesses are a crucial part of the local economy.

At the time, Mark Laret, CEO of UCSF Medical Center and the UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, said the huge project would create hundreds of short-term construction jobs, and ultimately bring more than 1,000 hospital employees to the new medical campus, along with thousands of patients and visiting family members.

The existing multi-campus medical center is already a huge economic engine within UC San Francisco, UCSF officials said in June, accounting for nearly $1.83 billion of the campus’ $3.3 billion in 2009 revenue. (The $1.83 billion includes $300 million in faculty physicians’ medical practice revenue, along with the medical center’s.)

It accounts for one in three jobs at UCSF, about half of UCSF’s $3.2 billion in yearly expenses, and roughly half of its estimated annual capital construction costs of $180 million.

The medical center, like the rest of the biomedical research university, has been hurting for space since the mid-1970s, when UCSF agreed to cap growth at its Parnassus Heights campus to placate unhappy neighborhood residents. Things got even tighter in recent years, so the medical center, again like the rest of UCSF, started spreading into other parts of town.

Non-Parnassus outposts include its major outpatient campus at Mt. Zion; radiology services and clinical laboratory at China Basin; a women's health center on Sutter Street; initial clinical outposts at Mission Bay, such as the Orthopedics Institute; and the Lakeshore Family and Community Medicine Center, plus a number of community clinics where UCSF doctors and other health professionals practice and, in some cases, learn their professions.

To date, the massive project has garnered $375 million in philanthropic support, including a $100 million pledge from Salesforce.com CEO and founder Marc Benioff for the facility's 183-bed pediatric hospital, a $125 million matching grant from philanthropist Charles Feeney and his Atlantic Philanthropies last year, and two anonymous gifts of $25 million each.

In recent months, UCSF Medical Center's leaders have been scrambling to slash at least $160 million in interest charges on financing the big project, taking advantage of subsidized rates under the federal stimulus package's Build America bond program. They've also used lean construction techniques and high-tech 3-D modeling software to shave costs from the overall project's price tag.

As recently as two years ago, the medical center expected to receive $200 million in support from the state government for the project. But the recession and the continuing California budget crisis destroyed those hopes.

As of this spring, local officials anticipated putting up to $220 million of UCSF's own equity into the pot, along with a hoped-for $600 million in philanthropic gifts and $69 million in Children's Hospital bonds made possible by a November 2008 California ballot initiative.

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Read his blog postings at Bay Area BizTalk.

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Jonathan Yorba named CEO of Mexican Museum

San Francisco Business Times - by Sarah Duxbury

Mayor Gavin Newsom has named Jonathan Yorba to head the struggling Mexican Museum.

Yorba comes to San Francisco from Riverside, where he is arts and cultural affairs director for the city. There, he worked with Riverside's mayor, city council and others on a $1.57 billion public improvement project, including a downtown revitalization.

"The appointment of Dr. Yorba represents a major step towards seeing the museum move to a new home in the Yerba Buena Cultural District," Mayor Newsom said in a statement.

This announcement suggests that the long-stalled museum planned for Yerba Buena may soon come back to life.

Rather than the standalone museum designed by Architect Ricardo Legorreta, the museum will now become part of a mixed-use project at 706 Mission St. that Millennium Partners will build.

The Mexican Museum has an extensive collection of over 12,000 pieces, much of it donated by Nelson Rockefeller. The museum displayed the collection at Fort Mason Center until 2006, when it closed its gallery and laid off much of its staff to focus on raising money to build a new museum.

Those fundraising efforts, which have been ongoing for over a decade now, have never managed to gain any traction, despite years of support from the city's Redevelopment Agency.

The previous executive director, William Moreno, left the Mexican Museum in 2007. It has been largely without a staff since then.

The museum also has relatively new co-chairs of its board of trustees, Mario Diaz and Nora Wagner.

This is a coming home of sorts for Yorba, who from 1992 to 1997 was the acting executive director, interim curator and independent researcher at the Mexican Museum.

Yorba is a recognized expert on Latino arts and culture. He starts Sept. 15.

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Read her blog postings at Bay Area BizTalk.
S.F. pastes bull’s-eye on back of Target

San Francisco Business Times - by J.K. Dineen

Target Corp.’s support of an anti-gay politician in Minnesota is jeopardizing plans to establish its first two stores in San Francisco, say elected officials and political consultants familiar with the situation.

In July, Target contributed $150,000 to MNForward, a group supporting Republican Tom Emmer, a candidate for Minnesota governor. Emmer opposes gay marriage and as a state legislator sought to restrict gays and lesbians from being surrogate parents.

The donation outraged a number of San Francisco elected officials, including San Francisco Supervisor Bevan Dufty, a political moderate who has, in the past, been supportive of Target’s efforts to locate in San Francisco. Dufty, who is gay and is running for mayor, said he has recently been in discussions with Target executives about the situation. He would not elaborate on the specifics or say whether he would support Target’s new stores, both of which will likely require conditional use permits approved by the Board of Supervisors.

“I have not made up my mind — that will be determined by future discussions,” said Dufty. “It’s clearly in the public domain that Target made an unfortunate decision of getting involved with MNForward and undermined their brand and their reputation.”

Another interested party who was at a San Francisco meeting with Target officials described the situation as “a mess” and said efforts to persuade Target to apologize and contribute to local LGBT groups “are falling on deaf ears.”

Wavering support

The controversy comes as Target is trying to line up political support for two new San Francisco stores. One store, slated for at the Metreon, is scheduled to go before the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency on Sept. 21. Another 100,000-square-foot store has been proposed for 2675 Geary Blvd., a shopping center that has been struggling since the former tenant, Mervyns, closed at the end of 2008. That project is still in the planning process.

Political analyst David Latterman of Fall Line Analytics said that the Emmer issue is unlikely to fade away. For some supervisors, who generally oppose big-box chains, this political hot potato represents another reason to oppose a project they probably would have gone against anyway; for those who are inclined to support Target, it offers a reason not to do so.

“If Target does not play this right, they will not get those stores,” said Latterman. “A lot of people are not going to mobilize for Target even though many, many people want the stores in here. It’s going to cost Target unless they take the mitigating steps. The only question is what those mitigating steps are going to be.”

Talks broke down
A Target spokeswoman said the retailer would not comment on the Emmer controversy or how it might affect its proposed stores in San Francisco, but said the retailer “has a proven track record in successfully entering and servicing densely populated areas and we are excited to explore opportunities in San Francisco.”

After the controversy erupted, the Human Rights Campaign, one of the largest LGBT advocacy groups, met with Target executives, proposing that Target donate to gay rights organizations to offset the earlier donation. Those talks broke down without an agreement in August. Dufty pointed out that Target has worked hard previously to earn a 100 percent rating from the Human Rights Campaign and has heavily courted LGBT shoppers with gay designers like Isaac Mizrahi.

“Given everything they have done to position themselves as the national retailer of choice to the gay community, this contribution is offensive at best and at worst an utter betrayal of those values,” said Dufty.

**Filling empty space**

The lease with Target on Geary has not yet been signed, but talks have progressed far enough that both parties have discussed the deal publicly. The owner of the property at the corner of Geary and Masonic Avenue, KLA Geary LLC, has approached city planners and district supervisors to gauge support for the project. As a formula retail business, Target requires a conditional use permit in order to open. Target would also occupy a portion of the former Good Guys store, which was shuttered in late 2005.

Like the Masonic and Geary center, the Metreon has also struggled, and Target is part of its planned repositioning.

“As a supervisor I am very aware that the Metreon has never had a successful retailer and I want to see the Metreon thrive. But I also plan to talk to (owner) Westfield, and hope that they would also like to see Target make some sort of amends in this situation.”

Calls to redevelopment agency officials were not returned.

Alex Clemens, founder of **Barbary Coast Consulting**, said the city poses challenges for outside businesses.

“When an organization seeks to do business in San Francisco, it needs to understand that its baseline value proposition of jobs and tax revenue doesn’t always paint a sufficiently compelling picture for our leaders and locals,” he said.

Bill Barnes, a legislative aide to Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier, said the termed-out District 2 Supervisor supports the Geary Target. The store straddles districts 1 and 2.

“It’s up to shoppers whether they want to go to a certain stores,” he said. “The planning code doesn’t include anything about political contributions being relevant to zoning decisions.”
High-flying tech companies are chasing scarce SoMa office space, reminiscent of the early dot-com boom days.

Despite 18 percent office vacancy rates in downtown San Francisco, a growing number of tech tenants are struggling to find the sort of creative space they traditionally have been drawn to. In fact, Class B rents in SoMa are at times topping Class A rates in the financial district, and demand is outstripping supply for tech space between 5,000 square feet and 10,000 square feet, according to a new report by Jones Lang LaSalle.

Citywide there is a supply-to-demand ratio of more than 2-to-1 — that is, two appropriately-sized blocks of space available for every one tenant in the marketplace, according to the report. But for creative buildings in SoMa, there are more tenants looking to rent space than there are buildings to accommodate them.

The squeeze drove up SoMa rents by 2.5 percent in the second quarter, in contrast to the rest of the city, where rents are still weakening for most types of space, according to JLL. This trend should accelerate when the third-quarter numbers come into focus. For tenants looking for spaces between 10,000 square feet and 30,000 square feet “it’s a very tight market with few options for tenants.”

“Anecdotal reports would suggest that rate increases are accelerating,” said JLL Research Director Colin Yasukochi. “I would say that in some cases it has been 10 percent or more in particular buildings where there is not a lot of space but tenants want to be.”

Colliers International’s SoMa tech team recently completed two deals that were similar in size and length of term. The third and fourth floors of a South Financial District building leased for $28 a square foot. The deal on the third and fourth floor of a brick and timber structure in SoMa leased for $38 a square foot. Frank Fudem, a veteran broker with Cassidy Turley BT Commercial, said he also recently did a long-term deal for less than $30 a square foot in Class A downtown building. During the same week, a $40-a-square-foot lease was inked in a Class B SoMa building.

“Who would have thought that a Class B building on Brannan Street would command more than Class A space in the financial district?” said Fudem.

Currently, Colliers is tracking 60 tech tenants South of Market looking for 1.2 million square feet. More than half of the requirements are for between 10,000 and 30,000 square feet.

Large tenant challenges
The story for large tenants is a little different. Companies like Zynga, Twitter and Dolby have all been in the
S.F. market tightens for tech tenants - San Francisco Business Times

market for more than 150,000 square feet. After a deal fell through to take 200,000 square feet at 500 Terry Francois, Zynga has focused on 650 Townsend St., although that deal is not done. Now Dolby is said to be looking at 500 Terry Francois, about 280,000 square feet. Twitter is working with Jones Lang LaSalle and is said to be looking for 150,000 square feet.

JLL Managing Director David Churton said there are still options for large tech tenants with patience. But most of the options — buildings like 1355 Market St., 155 Fifth St. and 680 Folsom St. — require lengthy and multimillion-dollar renovations.

“You could make the argument that there are seven to 10 blocks of space in excess of 200,000 square feet,” said Churton. “But it’s darn hard to find even 50,000 square feet of cool brick space.”

Complicating the picture has been the fact that the city’s fastest-growing tech tenants, including Twitter and Zynga, have shunned the traditional financial district, where many of the biggest vacancies lie. Salesforce has been a notable exception. Salesforce now occupies more than 600,000 square feet in four San Francisco buildings on both sides of Market Street: One Market Plaza, One California St., 123 Mission St. and the Landmark at One Market St.

“They have their core with their Landmark (at One Market) space and they are just trying to fill in around it — almost like an urban campus,” said Churton.

Another JLL Managing Director, Greg Fogg, said the most successful of the tech firms will eventually be forced to take boring, typical Class A financial district space if they want to stay in the city.

“I believe as these companies mature they will have to come to the traditional core financial district,” said Fogg. “Salesforce is a great example of that. Ultimately, as you have a larger workforce, you are going to need the same things that any big tenant needs, like transportation and access.”

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Read his blog postings at Bay Area BizTalk.

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Terminal clogs local lavatories

Lack of bathrooms at temporary transit hub spills into businesses

By Brent Begin

The absence of bathrooms and benches at a temporary transit hub downtown was meant to keep the homeless away but has left commuters uncomfortable and local businesses inundated with lines to use their lavatories.

The $1.9 billion temporary Transbay Terminal at Howard and Main streets will be in operation for at least seven years while the new terminal is built. It serves dozens of transportation lines including Muni, AC Transit, SamTrans and Golden Gate.

While it opened in August to mostly positive reviews from commuters, many have complained that the lack of bathrooms has proven troublesome for nearby businesses.

"They say they will buy something, and when they come back and leave. They probably go to Starbucks," said some of the performers are playing accor-

"No where to go"

By Mike Aldax

Street musicians are not in tune with the Ferry Building's recent crackdown on where they can play during Saturday farmers markets. For the past two weeks Ferry Building managers say they've been less accommodating to musicians who play for tips at the market because vendors have complained they can be loud and drive away customers.

Musicians say customers adore them and managers are listening too closely to certain crabby vendors that dislike their brand of music.

Property manager Jane Connors said some of the performers are known to block fire lanes and pathways. A few vendors told The San Francisco Examiner certain musicians play the same song over and over for hours.

The crackdown began after a tasting booth that typically sees 400 customers saw only 50 due to a bathroom musician, Connors said.

A main problem area of the market is a crowded section with food vendors located at the southern side of the building, vendors said.

"The right note: San Francisco-based band Human Condition was told to leave the building farmers market area, but they found a nearby place on public land.

Can't hold it in? The temporary Transbay Terminal has received generally positive reviews, but the lack of bathrooms has proven troublesome for nearby businesses.

Nowhere to go

By Brent Begin

"We've seen more burn around," Panchal said. "It's a problem but not a ridiculous problem."

A spokesperson for the Transbay Terminal project, Adam Alberti, said the bathrooms were kept out of the design for security purposes much like BART closed bathrooms in San Francisco stations after 9/11.

"Unfortunately, security comes at the cost of convenience," Alberti said. "As far as local businesses go, we're aware that the terminal has increased their customer base considerably, but we're unaware of any demand on their bathroom facilities."

Oakland attorney John Burris, who was contacted by a friend, brought up the prospect of a lawsuit this week to remedy the problem. He said that the lack of a latrine could pose a serious problem to the disabled and elderly.

"I would hope that the Transbay people would realize they've made a mistake and they'll fix it themselves," Burris said. "It just seems to me it's common sense."

But maybe not everyone will bother local businesses when the need arises. Gamaliel Franco has been travelling out of the Transbay Terminal for 18 years, and wasn't pleased to learn of the absence of toilets.

"When you want to go, you got to go," he said.

Ferry Building, street musicians not in harmony

By Mike Aldax

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Popular Blue Bottle lands park spot, but nearby merchants concerned

By Kamala Kelkar
Examiner Staff Writer

A vendor infamous for its inevitably long lines for a cup of joe is planting a food cart in Dolores Park.

Blue Bottle LLC — which already attracts hundreds of coffee aficionados who wait in long lines at its Ferry Building, Hayes Valley, Mint Plaza and SFMOMA hot spots — was granted a lease to sell its organic and pesticide-free beans in the park.

The Recreation and Park Commission approved the lease at its regular meeting Thursday, with two revisions: It was cut from five years to two years, and the cart can't be "smack dab" in the middle of the park.

Surrounding store owners told park officials at the meeting they would feel more comfortable if the cart was not in the heart of the park — which was what the lease allowed — or directly competing with them.

Commission President Mark Buell made the motion to agree to the lease, but asked staff to come back at its next regular meeting with a location that might have everyone in more agreement.

"Let's restrict the proximity," Buell said. "We have to be respectful of the people who have been there!"

And even with the revisions, owner James Freeman and about a dozen employees and fans who came to support him were happy just to land the spot.

"There's a bottomless demand for a good cup of coffee in this town," Freeman told commissioners.

EXAMINER FILE PHOTO

Park chow: Blue Bottle coffee has landed a spot for a coffee cart in Dolores Park to sell its famous java seven days a week.

The cart will be open seven days a week between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. to sell its individually dripped, $2-$3 cups of coffee along with several other paired items such as a $3 parmesan brioche and a $2 double chocolate cookie.

However, local store owners who have served park dwellers for years were not amused.

"I just wish [Rec and Park] would have let us know first," said Dolores Park Café owner Rachel Herbet. "I'm most concerned with the process and how this came about."

kkelkar@sfgate.com

Coffee cart stirs up dissent

Slough bridge cues lawsuit

By John Upton
Examiner Staff Writer

A controversial bridge planned for the redeveloped Hunters Point shipyard has spurred a lawsuit by environmentalists.

The City has approved plans for the former naval land and adjacent Candlestick Point that will ultimately contain 10,000 residential units as well as 320 acres of park and open space and 700,000 square feet of retail and entertainment space.

Included in the plans, however, is a 905-foot-bridge that would cross Yosemite Slough in order to connect the two portions of the development. The span, which would be for bus rapid transit, pedestrians and bicyclists, has been called a key piece to building a new stadium for the 49ers at the former shipyard.

Environmentalists, however, oppose the bridge because it could damage restored habitat.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society and local Sierra Club chapter sued Thursday in San Francisco Superior Court alleging the bridge is unnecessary and will harm the environment.

Mayor Gavin Newsom's spokesman Tony Winnicker said the lawsuit was anticipated and that he expects the bridge will be built.

"We're confident in the incredibly thorough environmental and public review this project received," Winnicker said.

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Troubled water: Environmentalists have filed a suit opposing a bridge that's part of the Hunters Point redevelopment plan, saying it will harm habitat.

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EDITORIAL

Think the economy is bad? Worse is coming

Economic prospects continue to grow gloomier as the Commerce Department revealed the second-quarter growth rate substantially downward from the initial estimate of 2.4 percent to a mere 1.6 percent. Just to stay on an even keel in terms of job creation, the growth rate needs to be at least 5 percent. It has averaged only 2.9 percent for the past four quarters.

Virtually every key economic indicator is pointing in either the wrong direction or is barely leaning to the positive side. Unemployment remains officially at 9.5 percent and is likely to head upward in the near future. If you count people who are either underemployed or have given up looking, the unemployment number nears a Great Depression-level of 20 percent.

The really bad news, however, is that things are going to get worse before they get better unless President Barack Obama and the Democratic Congress reverse course and abandon their plan to impose a huge tax increase on Jan. 1, 2011.

That's the day the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts are scheduled to expire. Tax rates on all five income brackets, not just those paid by "the rich," will increase by 2 to 4 percentage points, thereby blowing a $321 billion hole in the nation's ailing economy. Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have sent federal spending skyrocketing, from 20 percent of the Gross Domestic Product to 25 percent. The coming tax hike will drive the cost of government even further into the stratosphere, which will deprive the private sector of nearly a trillion dollars that could have gone to job creation.

Obama and the Democrats argue that extending the Bush tax rates would "cost" the government revenue needed to cut the federal deficit. But the deficit is primarily their doing, and is projected to average in excess of $1 trillion annually for the next decade. The way to reduce deficits is to cut federal spending and leave the Bush tax rates in place to generate additional government revenue. As Heritage Foundation economist J.D. Foster points out, "the rich," will increase by 2 to 4 percentage points, thereby blowing a $321 billion hole in the nation's ailing economy.

sparking new growth in the economy. "The 2008-2009 recession reduced tax receipts dramatically once again, yet Obama administration figures indicate that even absent any tax hikes federal receipts would reach $5.7 trillion by 2016, more than a trillion dollars above their previous highs," Foster points out.

Obama and congressional Democrats are also moving to enact onerous new tax hikes on the energy industry. Those hikes will come on top of the job-killing Gulf of Mexico drilling moratorium they've already imposed on the industry, which is projected to cost another 20,000 energy jobs.

FROM READERS

Civic group keeps focus on Mid-Market cleanup

A recent letter writer commenting on the state of Mid-Market is clearly uninformed about what civic organizations are doing to clean up the area. San Francisco Beautiful led the successful effort to defeat the November 2009 measure that would have blighted the neighborhood with billboards.

Since then, we have joined with the San Francisco Arts Commission and no less than a dozen other community organizations in the Mid-Market Cultural District Partnership. We are investing over $1 million in a comprehensive community development strategy including arts installations, exhibitions, performances and streetscape improvements intended to promote the neighborhood as a pedestrian-friendly arts and culture hub — without billboard blight.

On the evening of Sept. 21, San Francisco Beautiful will have a public presentation of its new report, "Mid-Market, a Center for Creative Action," at the Luggage Store Gallery. We invite Examiner readers to join with hundreds of other community and neighborhood activists at this informative event.

Robert C. Friesen
Chair
San Francisco Beautiful

Traffic flow needs attention

The Planning Department, police and Muni have done a great job of making the Market Street no-car experiment work and they deserve commendation. However, as The Examiner's Aug. 20 story noted, the improved Muni and bicycle flow along Market has been accompanied by some traffic slowing along Mission. As the Bay Area grows, additional steps will be necessary to protect San Francisco from too much traffic. Here are several that may warrant consideration:

There are 18 northbound traffic lanes entering San Francisco from the south, as opposed to five lanes from the east and four lanes from the north. Improving and extending Caltrain, shifting SamTrans from Mission to Market and instituting congestion pricing at appropriate locations during peak hours would facilitate more balanced transportation for San Francisco and San Mateo counties.

Gerald Cauthen
Oakland

BOOST ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

Our economy has been in a recession for over a year and the present administration's strategy is to spend more. The most effective means of helping the economy recover is to improve the incentives that drive economic activity by reducing tax rates on work, saving, investment, risk-taking and entrepreneurial activity. Our economic policies need to change now.

Leslie Turianni
Redwood City

SOUND BITE

"I am not saying all is, or necessarily will be, well in Iraq."

— Defense Secretary Robert Gates warns that political paralysis and continued sectarian violence still cloud Iraq's future as the U.S. combat mission officially finishes.

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State health exchange will slash, not boost, choice

By John R. Graham

Anticipating repeal, states are using a variety of tactics to oppose Obamacare, but California's legislature is trying to rush it into existence. That should concern every Californian, especially Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Unless repealed, Obamacare will require every American not dependent on government health plans like Medicaid or Medicare, or enjoying employer-based benefits, to purchase health insurance in a state "exchange" as of January 2014. On Aug. 24 and 25, the legislature sent two bills to Schwarzenegger. These bills would create California's exchange and supporting bureaucracy, which would be led by a board of five political appointees.

The governor's signature on these bills would harm Californians' access to health insurance. The best-case scenario for the California exchange is similar to the outcome in Massachusetts, where an April 2006 law created an exchange called the Commonwealth Connector, which also deploys a politically appointed board to limit people's choices of coverage. Not surprisingly, limited choice means higher costs.

Economists John Cogan and Daniel Kessler of Stanford University, and R. Glenn Hubbard of Columbia University, found that premiums in Massachusetts increased by 5 percent more than in the rest of the country, and 14 percent more for small businesses, between 2006 and 2008. California's exchange is likely to have significantly worse outcomes because of our Legislature's commitment to a government-monopoly (so-called "single-payer") health care system.

Fortunately, Schwarzenegger has vetoed this twice, in 2006 and 2008. President Barack Obama and Kathleen Sebelius, the U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services — along with many congressional Democrats — share our Legislature's passion for government-monopoly medical care. Although they did not have the votes to pass a single-payer bill, they view Obamacare as an important step toward this goal and have left the door open for states to apply for "waivers" to keep moving toward single-payer.

Sebelius should understand that the California exchange would soon embark on this mission. Its most important power would be to "selectively contract" with insurers to offer policies in the exchange. This is fundamentally different from traditional insurance regulation, which concerns solvency, fraud and good-faith claims processing by insurers. Instead, the exchange's bureaucrats would choose the policies available to Californians that Obamacare will force into the exchange.

That will be most of us. John Goodman of the National Center for Policy Analysis concluded that any household earning less than $80,000 annually will lose its employer-based benefits and be driven into an exchange.

Sebelius shouldn't be fooled by the notion that the federal government will grant California its own pot of money to start up and operate the exchange. Right now, Sebelius has no more than $81 million to grant to each state. With polls indicating a Republican majority (committed to repeal) in at least one congressional chamber after the midterm elections, California should not expect any further grants.

Polis show that between 50 and 60 percent of Americans oppose Obamacare. Most Americans know that Obamacare will increase costs to governments, employers and individuals. These higher costs will not lead to better health care or innovation. Instead, every doctor's decisions will be second-guessed by layers of new government bureaucracy.

Worse, the California exchange would persist even after Obamacare is repealed, implementing a government takeover that the nation will have regretted. Even if Obamacare survives, there's more than enough time for the next governor to bring the state into compliance with its onerous rules. Schwarzenegger has twice vetoed a government-monopoly health system. He would leave California a bitter legacy if he allowed the Legislature to sneak it past him in the last few months of his administration.

John R. Graham is director of health care studies at the Pacific Research Institute.

Phony fliers: More than 200 Chinese airline pilots applied with fake résumés

WHAT: The Chinese government is investigating the country's airline personnel after finding that more than 200 commercial pilots lied about their qualifications and experience.

WHY IT'S OUTRAGEOUS: At least 303 pilots flew for the parent company of Hainan Airlines, whose plane crashed Aug. 24, killing 42 and injuring 52 passengers and crew, when it came down short of the runway.

WHAT'S BEING DONE: Chinese aviation regulators hope to soothe public outrage by claiming the lawsuit fake. Happened is on board with 2008. If the defendants were grounded while completing extra training, and new pilot-hiring tests are supposedly tougher.

VIEWPOINTS

Harmful bills: If Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger does not veto two state bills to create a California health care exchange, residents will have less access to health insurance.

By Dan Walters

California's dismal economy and defensiveness state and local budgets created a chilly political climate for efforts to undermine state redevelopment laws and thus gain access to multimillion-dollar pots of money this year.

Local governments, cities mostly, can create redevelopment projects in urban areas plagued by blight, pump money into upgrading public facilities and underwriting private development, and then retain increases in tax revenue stemming from the new construction. Cities became very creative in defiling blight and using redevelopment funds to subsidize auto malls, shopping centers and other blight generators of sales and property taxes, and diverting billions of dollars from schools, counties and other local governments — eventually $5 billion-plus a year.

Legislative reforms to curb redevelopment abuses were enacted in the 1990s. Ever since, local agencies have been trying to chip away at restrictions on defining blight and using redevelopment funds to subsidize development in unblighted areas.

Several bills that would, in one way or another, soften state redevelopment restrictions were introduced during the just-concluded legislative session, including one that would redefine blight and use redevelopment funds to subsidize development in unblighted areas.

One measure, sponsored by the city of Los Angeles and D-Carmel, could have insidious, long-term effects by setting a precedent for ignoring redevelopment reforms that other communities would be certain to emulate.

The other two bills reaching Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's desk are less bothersome. Both were sponsored by the city of Los Angeles and would mildly expand the purposes of redevelopment to include rehabilitation of low-income public housing and creating small-business incubators.

Some ambitious communities want to go even further, seeking authority to funnel redevelopment funds into paying for police patrols or, as in the case of one bill that died this year, using redevelopment dollars to assist distressed homeowners.

Propriety, used, redevelopment can be a valuable tool for community improvement. Improperly used, it can become a political slush fund. And, that's why maintaining the tight reform standards is important.

Dan Walters' columns are syndicated by the Scripps Howard News Service.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Stop slandering the Jews."-- Fidel Castro, in an unexpected message to Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

JUST MY OPINION

Is money from redevelopments a valuable tool or a slush fund?

Several California bills to soften restrictions are in play, which makes maintaining tight reform standards key.

By Dan Walters

The Daily Outrage

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Contact: Mayor’s Office of Communications,
415-554-6131

*** STATEMENT ***

MAYOR GAVIN NEWSOM HAILS APPROVAL OF CITYPLACE PROJECT AS CENTRAL TO MID-MARKET RENEWAL,
ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Mayor Gavin Newsom today issued the following statement following the Board of Supervisors’ rejection of the appeal of the Final Environmental Impact Report certification of the CityPlace project at 935 – 965 Market Street:

“The Board of Supervisors did the right thing for the Central Market neighborhood and for our entire City by rejecting the appeal of the CityPlace environmental review. CityPlace is a key pillar in the continuing revitalization of Mid-Market that will bring hundreds of jobs and new revenues to boost our City’s economy and thousands of new pedestrians and shoppers to activate one of the most blighted blocks of Market Street. Central Market’s existing small businesses and the expanding arts, cultural and entertainment venues will also benefit enormously from the project. By approving CityPlace today, San Francisco took another major step towards transforming the Central Market neighborhood and restoring Market Street to its original role as our City’s ‘Main Street.’”

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CITY HALL WATCH
Mid-Market mall plan clears another hurdle

Pet shop proposal stays alive; property tax rate gets bump

By Joshua Sabatini
Examiner Staff Writer

Downtrodden Mid-Market Street is on the road to renewal after a five-story mall development survived a challenge Tuesday by groups who favor policies encouraging public transit, walking and bicycling over driving vehicles.

The Board of Supervisors voted 9-0 Tuesday to reject an appeal of the project's environmental review, drawing praise from supporters who say the glass-fronted mall, known as CityPlace, is exactly what's needed to transform the area plagued by crime, empty storefronts and homelessness.

Appellants, who included Livable City and Walk San Francisco, said the report fails to adequately address the effects the planned underground parking garage with 170 vehicle spaces would have on the area when it comes to the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians.

The vote to reject the appeal came following a letter from CityPlace, which commits to paying a 20-cent surcharge per vehicle parking in the garage until $1.8 million is generated for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, which will use the money to study and implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the area.

Supervisor Chris Daly, whose district includes the mid-Market area, said, "The City is very interested in improving the livability, the walkability, bike safety in the mid-Market area and I am pleased that CityPlace is participating in a significant way in that."

The proposed CityPlace is a five-story, 90-foot-tall building with 375,700 gross square feet, of which about 260,000 will be used for retail, at 935-965 Market St. between Fifth and Sixth streets.

"The Board of Supervisors did the right thing for the Central Market neighborhood and for our entire city by rejecting the appeal of the CityPlace environmental review," Mayor Gavin Newsom said in a released statement.

"By approving CityPlace today, San Francisco took another major step toward transforming the Central Market neighborhood and restoring Market Street to its original role as our city's 'Main Street.'"

IN OTHER ACTION
The Board of Supervisors was two votes shy of the required eight to reject a special permit obtained by Pet Food Express to open a third San Francisco location at 3150 California St.

In an 11-0 vote, the property tax rate was increased slightly by 0.43 percent from $1.1159 to $1.164.

jsabatini@sfxaminer.com
N. Beach shop braces for food fight

Complaint spurs order for market to carry groceries

By John Upton
Examiner Staff Writer

A North Beach business might be forced by The City to start selling products that its owners say are doomed to rot on the shelves:

Groceries. Piazza Market opened in 2007 on Vallejo Street at Montgomery Street inside a prominent retail space left vacant since a grocery store went bust several years earlier.

Before opening, the market's owners secured permits from The City needed to sell alcohol and groceries and operate a small restaurant.

Last year, following dismal recession-era sales, the proprietors pulled groceries off the shelves and focused on bottled Californian wines, bar truffles, snacks and the bistro.

The market also hosts events, serves glasses and tastes of wine and operates a catering business. "The groceries didn't work," part-owner Sal Chiavino said.

Locals buy gourmet goods from established neighborhood groups, including the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, typically opposed to alcohol- or entertainment-based businesses.

That's because North Beach has grown into an entertainment district that suffers from a shortage of neighborhood-serving stores and an abundance of alcohol-related businesses.

But Chiavino and his partners say they could be forced to cut staff or be driven out of business if they are required to dedicate floor space to perishable products that they can't sell.

A Sept. 16 Planning Commission hearing will consider a request by Piazza Market to change its permit conditions and allow it to continue operating the way that it does today.

Such hearings were mandated by legislation passed by the Board of Supervisors in 2006 in response to a citywide string of grocery-store closures.

"We're pretty much at the mercy of the City," Chiavino said. "I think what they're trying to do is bring back the 1960s.

Displaced residents to see funds

By John Upton
Examiner Staff Writer

Financial assistance and training will start flowing to hopeful San Francisco homebuyers who were evicted in past decades when the Fillmore and Japantown neighborhoods were razed and redeveloped.

Scores of homes and other buildings were demolished by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in the 1960s and 1970s in the Western Addition redevelopment area.

Residents who were displaced from those homes are eligible to jump to the front of queues to buy low-income housing that is built by the Redevelopment Agency or city.

To help some of the thousands of affected former residents purchase homes in San Francisco, the Redevelopment Agency set aside $4 million for low-income loan and savings programs.

Most of the $4 million will go toward housing loans that will only need to be repaid after the home is resold. The loans can cover up to half of a home's purchase price.

But 10 percent of the funds were set aside for a savings program to be administered by nonprofit EARN, which provides training and other assistance to low-wage homebuyers.

To qualify for the savings program, homebuyers will need to attend financial and other training.

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, whose district includes the Western Addition, welcomed the program but said additional resources will be needed to help thousands of people who were evicted or relocated.

"This is good, but we need to be more vigorous in providing a greater reservoir of loans," Mirkarimi said.

"It has never cost less to add more space!"

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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

MAYOR NEWSOM ANNOUNCES SUNDAY STREETS IN WESTERN ADDITION

New Sunday Streets route through the Western Addition, North of Panhandle, Lower Fillmore and Japantown neighborhoods on Sunday, September 19th

San Francisco, CA—Mayor Gavin Newsom today announced a new route for Sunday Streets on Sunday, September 19th. San Francisco’s Sunday Streets program explores new communities with a 2.5-mile route through the Western Addition, North of Panhandle, Lower Fillmore and Japantown neighborhoods.

“We are excited to bring this popular event to the Western Addition neighborhood, this time in the center of the City and into one of San Francisco’s most diverse communities to promotes fitness, build community, and use our streets in a whole new way,” said Mayor Newsom. “Come out on Sunday and see for yourselves the remarkable transformation of Kimball Athletic Fields and Hamilton Rec Center.”

Sunday's event is the eighth of the nine scheduled for 2010. Like previous Sunday Streets, this event promises a full day of activities for participants of all ages and abilities. Due to enthusiastic involvement from the community, there are a number of special activities that are unique to the Western Addition event.

Coinciding with Sunday Streets, the Recreation & Parks Department and the City Fields Foundation present the grand opening celebration of the Kimball Playground’s Athletic Fields and will feature activities, entertainment, and team sports demonstrations on the newly opened Kimball Athletic Fields.

In honor of September’s National Preparedness Month, the Department of Emergency Management is hosting a “Preparedness Pavilion” on the 1400 Block of Grove Street, adjacent to the open house at Fire Station 21, which showcases interactive exhibits including a shake cottage (earthquake simulator) and a cyber-preparedness café featuring online preparedness resources.

The North Panhandle Neighborhood Association and Bike NOPA have scheduled a number of activities in the NOPA area, including live music at local cafes, face painting and kid’s activities by St Cyprian’s Episcopal Church, and kid’s bike safety programs on Grove Street. The Wigg Party will be presenting do-it-yourself art projects and live entertainment on Central Avenue.

Fillmore Street will buzz with activities from Golden Gate Avenue to Post Street, presented by the Fillmore Community Benefit District and Fillmore merchants. On Fillmore near Turk, the San Francisco Arts Commission and the Department of Public Works will premier their “Mobile Free Wall Activity” pilot program, which provides temporary free areas where urban artists can ply their skills. Notable urban artists will oversee Free Wall Activities to facilitate crowd participation. Church of John Coltrane, located at 1286 Fillmore, celebrates their 41st anniversary and invites the public to stop by and join their celebration. Marcus Books at Fillmore and Post Streets will host live music and a sidewalk sale near on the north end of the route.
Japantown’s Peace Plaza is the northern hub of the Sunday Streets route and will host ethnic dances, cultural performances and meditation, presented by the Japantown Merchant Association. Later in the evening, the Center for Asian American Media and the Japantown Merchants Association present a free outdoor showing of *Howl’s Moving Castle*. Buchanan YMCA hosts children’s activities in Hayward Playground on Laguna between Golden Gate Avenue and Turk Street.

Other programs along the route include: yoga (Panhandle and Japantown’s Peace Plaza), activities and information for pets (Panhandle), community information tables (Panhandle), live music and mini park set up by SF Creative Arts Charter School (Golden Gate and Pierce), and sign language lessons by the Hearing and Language Center (GG and Pierce).

Wheeled activities of all kinds, including a skating rink with music and free skate rentals (Golden Gate and Baker), roller soccer demonstrations (Golden Gate and Webster) and the ever-popular bike programs are a mainstay of Sunday Streets programs. Young cyclists can hone their skills at the SF Bicycle Coalition’s “Freedom from Training Wheels” course or the Presidio YMCA Bike Program’s youth bike safety rodeo. For those without bikes, free bike rentals will be available by Blazing Saddles who will bring a fleet of bikes (Japantown/Peace Plaza). Free minor bike tune-ups will be available, presented by REI (Panhandle), Sanfrancyclo (Fillmore St), and the Wigg Party (Central and Grove).

**Sunday Streets September 19 Program Highlights:**
- Buchanan YMCA presents children’s games, hula hoops and more (Hayward Playground)
- Pet programs, including a dog agility course in the Panhandle (Fell / Central)
- Kimball Athletic Fields Grand Opening Celebration (Steiner / Ellis)
- Preparedness Pavillion by Dept of Emergency Management (Grove /Baker)
- Free Wall Activity presented by Dept of Public Works and SF Arts Commission (Fillmore/ Turk)
- Interactive science demonstrations with the Climate Change Education program (Panhandle)

The final event of the season occurs on October 24th in the Civic Center/Tenderloin neighborhoods. Plans for Sunday Streets 2011 will be announced later this year.

**Sunday Streets creates a safe, fun, car-free place for people to get out and be active in San Francisco neighborhoods. Sunday Streets is presented by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), Livable City and the City of San Francisco. Livable City, a local transportation-oriented non-profit manages the day-to-day operations and serves as the program’s fiscal sponsor. San Francisco’s Recreation and Parks Department provides access to the many parks and open spaces along each Sunday Streets route and The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition manages the Volunteer component of Sunday Streets. To volunteer, please go to [www.sundaystreetsSF.com/volunteer](http://www.sundaystreetsSF.com/volunteer).**

**Major support for Sunday Streets is provided by public and private sponsors, including the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Kaiser Permanente, California Pacific Medical Center, Shape Up SF, Walgreens, the Japantown Merchant Association, REI and PUBLIC Bikes. Major media sponsorship is provided by Clear Channel Radio and Outdoor and The San Francisco Examiner.**

**To find out more about Sunday Streets go to: [www.sundaystreetsSF.com](http://www.sundaystreetsSF.com). Information about auto detours can be accessed by calling 311 or visiting online at [www.sfgov.org/311](http://www.sfgov.org/311).**

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