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NEWS FROM PROWLER, INC.

Issue #4 - Fall 2006

Prowler, Inc. is in its seventh year of helping developers and public agencies in San Francisco with entitlement and public participation challenges. Please enjoy this, the fourth issue of the newsletter, check out the rest of the website at www.prowler.org, and keep in touch at info@prowler.org.

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>> EL CERRITO MONTESSORI SCHOOL



Prowler, Inc. spent some time this summer in El Cerrito, working on behalf of the Montessori Family School as they sought permission to turn a church and school into a larger single use school.

We knew that traffic and the sounds of playing children (sometimes known as "noise") would be potential issues, so we put together plans for dealing with these concerns and went to the neighbors to show the thought that had gone into becoming good neighbors.

The result: Unanimous approval by the El Cerrito Planning Commission

>>POP QUIZ #2



San Francisco's planning and development environment changes rapidly. How well are you keeping up? Take the quiz to see:

1: Mayor Gavin Newsom's uncle is:

- A: Ed Asner.
- B: Gordon Getty.
- C: Sid Caesar.
- D: Garrison Keillor.



Answer: --- A.
Ed Asner.

2: Who gave the best testimony on behalf of the proposed San Francisco General Hospital Helipad?

- A: A 14-year old boy who said "helicopters are neat".
- B: A woman whose life was saved by a medical helicopter flight.
- C: A neighbor who finds the neighborhood too quiet.
- D: Former Mayor Art Agnos, who was saved by S.F. General Hospital when the Zebra Killer shot him.

Answer: --- B.
She was recruited on advice of David Prowler, consulting with S.F. General Hospital. The Health Commission voted unanimously to proceed with the helipad.

3: How long does environmental review take in Oakland and

>> PROWLER, INC. ASSISTING AF EVANS



AF Evans, one of the largest homebuilders in the San Francisco, has retained Prowler, Inc. to manage the entitlement of a proposed residential tower project at Pine and Franklin Streets. Just a block off the Van Ness Corridor, the under-utilized site is a great place for new residents.

Evans has extensive experience with high quality and socially important project throughout the Bay Area and in Seattle. It is a great honor to work with them.

>>PROWLER AT IDEO



You have probably used a project designed by the folks at **Ideo** - the computer mouse for example. Along with product design, they also design environments. Their approach is unique: they design experiences, which are enhanced with thoughtful design. It's an approach that works for places like the redesigned MOMA lobby as well as for urban spaces like neighborhoods in Kansas City and Downtown Dallas

David Prowler was invited to lead a discussion at the waterfront office of Ideo on what a firm like Ideo and city planners and developers can learn from each other. As an example he talked about the approach used in the development of the Chinatown Community Plan (which he directed in the late 1980's): interviewing and observing to see how people actually use each alley and street in Chinatown differently.

And he learned about how Ideo uses narratives and story telling to learn about how people use spaces and what they want out of their environments. It's a whole new way to think about learning and addressing the needs of users, whether they are using a laptop or a neighborhood. And by starting with ways people use city spaces maybe we can design the city and its buildings better.

>>ONE RINCON CONSTRUCTION & SALES



The sales at One Rincon Hill made headlines, with almost all the available units snapped up in a week. Most buyers are current San Francisco residents and a surprising number have children. The opening night of the sales center was a frenzy, complete with a velvet rope where potential buyers queued up.

It's good news for the new homeowners and the union labor that is building the project. For the rest of us: architecturally distinguished towers, \$20 million for affordable housing, \$18.5 million to South Of Market improvements, \$4 million in initial transfer taxes, \$8 million in new annual property taxes.

It's hard to say whether the success of One Rincon Hill will

San Francisco for a 50-unit housing development?

- A: Oakland: 6 months, San Francisco 2 years.
- B: Oakland: 1 year, San Francisco 6 months.
- C: Oakland: none req'd, San Francisco: 15 - 21 months.
- D: Oakland: 1 month, San Francisco: 45 days.

Answer: --- C.

Oakland wouldn't require an EIR; they know that in a built up city an infill project wouldn't be significant. In San Francisco, just the wait to be assigned to a planner is 9 months, with review taking another 6 to 12 months.

4: True or False about the Department of Building Inspections

- A: Recently 80% of the plan checkers were eligible to retire.
- B: They've hired 41 new employees.
- C: Over 80% of all residential permit applications are approved at the counter.
- D: Easy online tracking for permits and complaints.
- E: They issue the rules for numbering of street addresses.

Answer: --- All TRUE.

5: Google has many listings for David Prowler. Which one isn't the Prowler, Inc. David Prowler?

- A: Developer of the Glen Park Marketplace; Mission Bay and Ballpark project manager; Planning Commissioner.
- B: Quoted in a Missouri Buddhist magazine.
- C: Collaborator on site specific art billboards.
- D: Golfing drycleaner with a sideline in cleaning up bloody crime scenes.

Answer:--- D.

> >THOUGHTS ON PLANNING

David Prowler has been reflecting on planning and the public role. He has written some thoughts on how the process "works" - and offers some ideas for improvement.

The piece addresses questions like:

- Movie attendance has plummeted - what are the implications for planning?
- Are attendees at community meetings more representative than people in a Laundromat or an AA meeting?
- Immigrants didn't like where they were - and left. And we are a city of immigrants. How should that shape our design of the public process?
- Just who benefits from "consensus"?

The conclusions:

- "Citizens participation" is a great idea if done right, but here it's more of a ritual.
- People have good reasons for not getting involved - and if we want them involved we need to do things differently.
- CEQA isn't a very good planning tool in a built up city.
- We expect too much - and too little - from planning.
- The system works very well - for insiders.
- There are better ways to plan if we want to.

Click here for the piece, called:

This is an article about planning and the public in San Francisco* (*but it's also about fear, love, laundromats, change and ritual).

translate to other proposals. The increase in cost of construction has been astronomical, with most of that attributable to shortages of materials as construction booms in Asia and the Middle East. Nobody really knows the depth of the market for high rise condos, particularly if mortgage rates resume their upward climb. But well designed, well located housing should continue to do well in San Francisco. Oakland may be a different story. It costs just as much to build there, land prices aren't much lower, and given the opportunity more people would prefer to live in San Francisco.

To follow the progress of One Rincon Hill construction, check out the webcam at: <http://www.onerinconhill.com/webcam.html>

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> > BIG NEWS FROM HPP

David Prowler is President of the Board of HPP (Homeless Prenatal Program) a 16-year old non profit helping families get back on their feet with housing assistance, mental health issues, parenting classes, drug and alcohol recovery, domestic violence escape, computer literacy - even prenatal yoga and food distribution.

We were just awarded a \$400,000 matching grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation. So if you give HPP a donation, the Foundation will give the same amount. To learn more about HPP, or to donate check out www.homelessprenatal.org.

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> >FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Previous editions of Prowler News:

FALL 2005:

- Supervisors Approve Rincon Hill Rezoning & One Rincon Hill
- SPUR newsletter article: Mission Bay: From Railyard to Neighborhood
- KPIX interview regarding earthquake preparedness

WINTER 2005/6

- Prowler, Inc. signed to assist with Tennis Club site
- Prowler, Inc. added to Port consultant panel
- One Rincon Hill groundbreaking
- S.F. Examiner Op-ed piece
- Homeless Prenatal Open House

SUMMER 2006:

- Glen Park Marketplace
- Jane Jacobs: 1916 - 2006
- Nonprofits and Real Estate: SPUR News April 2006
- Mayor Newsom at Homeless Prenatal Program
- Pop Quiz #1

For more information regarding any of the above, please contact: info@prowler.org
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