



PROWLER, Inc.

[Home](#)[News](#)[Government & Community Relations](#)[Project Management](#)[Quotes](#)[Client List](#)[Contact](#)

PROWLER NEWS

Issue #8 - Spring 2008

Prowler, Inc. is now in its 10th year of assisting owners and developers, non-profits, and public agencies with development and planning challenges. From time to time we publish this newsletter to let friends know about our activities and how we are helping our clients. We hope you find it useful and thought-provoking. We welcome [your feedback](#). And check out the website, at www.prowler.org

EASTERN NEIGHBORHOODS

> > EASTERN NEIGHBORHOODS PLANNING

Balancing jobs and housing is really tough – and growing them is even harder :

The Planning Department unveils plan for the Eastern-Neighborhoods. David Prowler participates in SPUR's and Housing Action Coalition's review committees.



For the past nine years, the Planning Department has been studying the "Eastern Neighborhoods" to develop a zoning plan with two goals: "Stabilizing industrial lands and providing affordable housing."

Just about everyone agrees with the goals, just not how to achieve them. David Prowler has been working over the past few

months with two committees analyzing the Plan: SPUR's and the Housing Action Coalition's. Here are some ways we think the Plan could be made much better:

- SPUR suggests adding a third goal: "Rezoning should seek to combat job and housing sprawl by concentrating growth on our major transit infrastructure". Sprawl is no joke: ABAG projects that by 2025 the Bay Area's population will grow from 2000's count of 7 million to 8.4 million – a 20% increase. We've got to plan for that - rather than believing, as a member of a citizen's planning body appointed by the Board said: "If we don't build it they will not come".
- Directing growth to transit would mean increasing development around the 16th and 24th Street BART stations, along 3rd Street, and at the 4th Street Caltrain station. These areas benefit from tremendous public investment in transit - some of the most intensive transit in the U.S. The Plan should be much more aggressive in promoting jobs and housing here.
- SPUR goes on: "Streets such as Valencia and Mission – BART and Muni corridors, in other words – are ideal locations for intensification, from an environmental perspective."
- A parallel planning process, not coordinated with the Eastern Neighborhoods planning, is underway for a subarea called Western SOMA. There, the blocks near the Caltrain station would be downzoned.

Prowler, Inc. has been helping the owners of the SF Tennis Club plan for smarter growth at that 2.6 acre site. It's a block and a half from the train station, on the same block as a proposed subway station. Fewer than a hundred people work there. It's a bunker, with no doors on the street, nor windows

Industries are leaving for a variety of reasons other than zoning or land costs. Look at Folsom Street's *Weiss Welding*. They've been in business since 1930, when Bill Weiss' grandfather started the business and they've been on Folsom Street since 1938. In that time they've made and repaired metal things from streetcars to office chairs. Business was a lot better when ship repair was booming. Over the past couple of decades, the neighborhood has seen a boom in development of residential units.

But the new neighbors aren't a problem for Bill and Susan Weiss. "Actually," says Susan, "it cleans up the neighborhood." And the neighbor who used to complain about the noise from the shop has lived there for decades. The challenges to Weiss Welding aren't because of demographic changes or the live work lofts around them and can't be addressed with zoning. Bill and Susan list their worries: tickets for loading materials too early, payroll tax, loss of shipyard work, difficulty of hiring skilled workers, and traffic.

The Weisses are not alone: since 2000, according to the City's economic development strategy, fully half of the City's manufacturing jobs have left town.

The jobs the Plan wants to save are found in industries facing challenges beyond the ability of zoning to fix. The City's Economic Development Strategy says that we should target "knowledge based" industries for growth. The Plan, however, favors industrial jobs over those sectors likely to grow - and to employ more San Franciscans at all educational levels. For example, any workspace with computers is considered an office and treated the same as any Downtown office. That includes digital media labs, animators, web designers, game developers, architects and designers. And office growth is severely restricted.

David Prowler was on a SPUR panel in December to present the needs of the digital industry in San Francisco, an outgrowth of Prowler Inc.'s work with San Francisco State and the Institute for Next Generation Internet. According to the Institute there are over 600 digital media companies in the city.

It's not clear whether residences and office uses are displacing industry or simply replacing it. If they are replacing in space which would otherwise remain vacant, that's a benefit.

The Plan should link zoning and economic development. The main strategy in the Plan is to keep land available by discouraging other uses such as market rate housing and offices. Preservation of land is easy, but creating jobs and keeping them here is the tough challenge.

For a really good look at what's happening with blue collar jobs in San Francisco, check out the report, [Made in San Francisco](#).



1: According to the Planning Department’s latest **Housing Inventory Report**, what percentage of housing built in San Francisco in 2006 has been ‘affordable’?

- A. 9%
- B. 11%
- C. 19%
- D. 29%.

2. Who was Mayor Newsom talking about when he said, “At...Department X....I hired a director who is more attuned to working with communities.”

- 1. Newsom appointee Annemarie Conroy at Emergency Services
- 2. Newsom appointee Tony Hall over at Treasure Island
- 3. Brown holdover Marcia Rosen at Redevelopment
- 4. Newsom appointee Susan Leal at the Public Utilities Commission

3: Which of the following used to attend the Booker T. Washington Community Center’s programs?

(See last issue of Prowler News for the article about the Center and the housing to be built at Pine and Franklin – two Prowler, Inc. projects.)

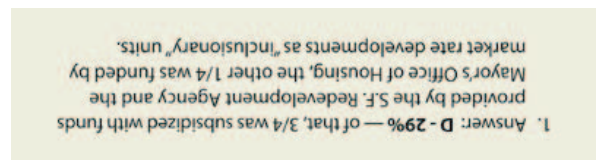
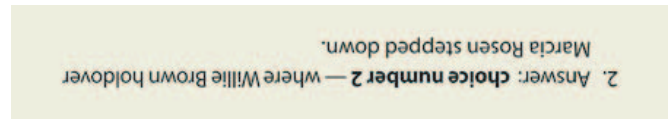
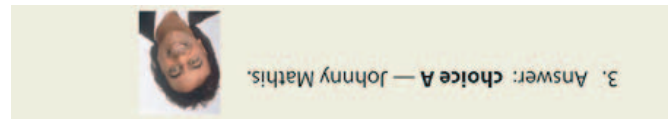
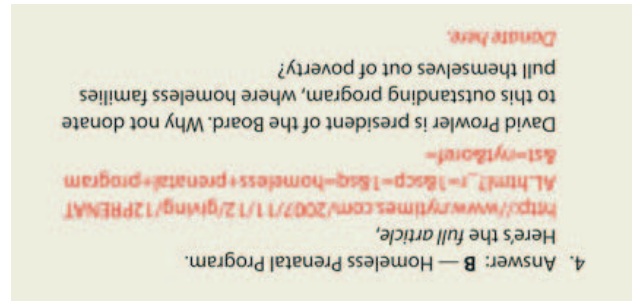
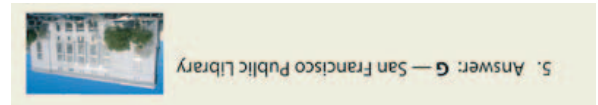
- A. Johnnie Mathis
- B. Willie Brown
- C. Ed Asner
- D. Robin Williams

4: What did the *New York Times* call “The best kept secret in San Francisco?”

- A. Golden Produce, the fruit and vegetable store at Church and Market
- B. The Homeless Prenatal Program
- C. Prowler, Inc.
- D. The Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety
- E. The Mayor’s Office of Postal Increase Control Initiatives

5: Which of the following has *not* been a client of Prowler, Inc.

- A. S.F. Tennis Club
- B. Sprint
- C. San Francisco General Hospital
- D. Joie de Vivre Hospitality
- E. City of Long Beach
- F. San Francisco Public Library
- G. Emerald Fund
- H. AF Evans
- I. Department of Building Inspection
- J. Pulte Homes
- K. San Francisco State University



ANSWERS:

>> SAN FRANCISCO GIFTCENTER

It's remarkable how buildings change with the times if we let them.

- The Ferry Building was one of the world's major transit stations until the 1930's. Now of course it is a food hall with offices above
- The old Sears Building on Mission at Chavez went from department store to unemployment office to artists' lofts
- The home of HPP: The Homeless Prenatal Program, at 18th and Potrero, was a print shop, and then an unsuccessful dot.com incubator before it filled with moms and kids helping each other out of homelessness. (David Prowler is board president. Visit www.homelessprenatal.org to learn more)
- The old Pacific Stock Exchange is now a fancy gym
- The Asian Art Museum was the Main Library
- Cliff's Variety Store on Castro was a movie theatre - take a look from the back to the front and you can see the former projection booth

At 8th and Brannan, there's the Giftcenter & Jewelmart - at 2.6 acres and almost 400,000 square feet it's one of the City's biggest buildings. When it was built, trains ran right into the building delivering paper. Now it's a warren of small showrooms displaying everything from kids' clothing to tiaras to Christmas ornaments. It's a real hodgepodge and around the time of trade shows it jumps. Fifty or so nights a year events are held in the atrium, sometimes with acrobats and once an elephant.

With time, the demand for showroom space has diminished. Big Box stores buy in Asia and the containers go directly from China to every Costco or WalMart in the country. And production times have changed. A shopkeeper no longer has to order in February the dishes they want to sell for the holidays in December. And of course, you can get as much of whatever you want by clicking a mouse. As a consequence, the GiftCenter is about 20% vacant and has been for years.

The building is in the area that the proposed Eastern Neighborhoods Plan calls Urban Mixed Use - a place for people to live, shop, and work. "Work" could be anything from "Digital/Multimedia Production" to auto repair. The idea is to mix it up; to encourage that the district can meet as broad a variety of needs as possible.

Prowler, Inc. is working with the owners of the Giftcenter to ensure that the Plan affords them the flexibility to add new types of uses to the building. Offices on higher floors, retail to invite the public in, and a continuation of the showrooms would all advance the goal of a truly mixed use neighborhood. And breathe new life into this great building.

"It's been a struggle for us to keep up with the City's plan for the area," says Mark D'Ambrosi, the Operations Manager of the buildings. "David's helped us to understand the planners' positions and he's helped them to better understand our needs. Thanks to David, we're far ahead of where we began."

>> PARKMERCED

A Model for Addressing Environmental Challenges.

Parkmerced is a 116-acre dinosaur out by San Francisco State. It's laid out to meet the needs of post-war society, when the car was king and energy and water were cheap. Residents have to drive to buy even a carton of milk, many of the residents are more than a ten minute walk to the nearest Muni stop, and at only 28 households to the acre it's just over half as dense as the Citywide average. You won't see very many pedestrians on its streets - and it's for good

reason that most of them are called Drives. Almost 6 million gallons of water a year go into irrigating the grounds. And the lower-rise housing was built of wood and stucco without insulation, so it costs a fortune to heat them.

Parkmerced Investors, LLC, the new owners of Parkmerced, are proposing a bold direct approach to address sprawl and to conserve both energy and water. They plan to more than double the housing, increasing the number of homes from the current 3,221 by adding an additional 5,677 (almost as many as will be in [Mission Bay](#)). Right off the bat that will help with sprawl. Any displaced renters will be offered new homes on site with continued rent controlled status. That many people will be able to support grocery stores and banks, cutting down on auto trips offsite. So will the proposed re-routing of the M streetcar into the heart of the site.

So far so good, but what's bold are the measures to save water and energy. With a combination of wind turbines, solar water heaters, photovoltaic cells, and even cogeneration technology, energy use per household will be reduced up to 60%. The project will be virtually removed from the City's electrical grid. Better irrigation, run-off control, and new plumbing technologies and fixtures will cut water use by 40% per unit and help regenerate Lake Merced.

It's great to see [Parkmerced demonstrate](#) - on the ground - how development can use 21st century techniques to address 21st century challenges. It's bold planning and a good model as we consider the growth of the rest of the City.

>> LBE + LAI + HAC

For the past few years, Prowler, Inc has been certified by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission as a Local Business Enterprise (LBE), able to provide advantages to partners bidding for City contracts.

And now David Prowler is an LAI too. He was inducted at a dinner at the end of 2007 into [Lambda Alpha International](#), the Honorary Society for the study and advancement of land economics. Members are nominated based upon "notable contributions to the study and ethical practice of land use."

Plus, Prowler, Inc. is now a member of the [Housing Action Coalition](#).



Richard T. Ely
1854-1943
Founder of LAI



Human
Rights
Commission

>> EROS

You might get a kick out of the piece David Prowler did for the February 2008 SPUR newsletter, an appreciation of "[Erotic Hotspots on Market Street](#)".

Here are a couple of shots that didn't make it into the article. These ladies are next door neighbors at the Warfield Building.



Continued on next page