



Thursday, June 16, 2005

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**Mayor's former loft approved as shelter**  
**Conditions on Jack London warehouse placate neighbors**

By Paul T. Rosynsky, STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Jack London Square residents are getting new neighbors, and Mayor Jerry Brown and his We the People Foundation will receive at least \$3 million from the group moving into his old loft.

The Oakland Planning Commission late Wednesday agreed to grant Covenant House permission to open a young-adult homeless shelter in Brown's former home at 200 Harrison St.

Brown lived in the building for about six years and turned the warehouse into a mecca of free and alternative thinking. He hosted the "We the People" radio program there, allowed eccentric figures to move in and hosted lectures in the loft that attracted large crowds.

The Planning Commission agreed the building and its central location are ideal for the shelter. Commissioners agreed to grant a special permit for its operation, as long as Covenant House agrees to several conditions.

The approval came after a more-than-hourlong discussion in which most speakers said they would welcome the organization and its young adults as long as they remain orderly and are properly supervised.

Good background

Judging by comments made by some neighbors of the organization's temporary shelter at the St. Andrews-St. Joseph Catholic Church in North Oakland and others who have worked with the group, that should not be a problem.

"This is not a bunch of criminals, this is a group in need of support," said Amy Freeman, coordinator for the Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance. "Why shouldn't our young people, who have suffered so much, have the opportunity to enjoy this area?"

Debate over whether the converted warehouse is the proper location for a young-adult shelter began late last month when residents first found out Brown was seeking to sell his former home to Covenant House.

A community meeting that followed failed to ease fears as many of the residents' concerns were not answered.

Some felt property values in the area would decline, while others worried about access shelter residents would have to neighboring buildings through a rooftop garden built at the

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warehouse.

The debate heightened last week when

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Brown described the dispute as a "back-fence spat with a disgruntled neighbor who has opposed more than one Jack London Square project."

Commission conditions

Planning Commission members alleviated many of those worries by placing about 20 conditions on Covenant House before unanimously approving the project.

Those included forcing the group to build a fence on the roof, requiring a minimum of at least eight supervisors at the shelter during the day and forbidding shelter residents from loitering out front.

Planning Commission members also urged Covenant House to meet regularly with Jack London Square residents to solve any problems that arise.

"I've never seen a majority of residents say, 'Yeah, we want a shelter here,'" said Planning Commissioner Michael Lighty. "But this is the place for the Covenant House, there is no better location. It's just ideal."

George Lozano, California director for the organization, also tried to alleviate fears.

Lozano said the converted warehouse would be used strictly for housing and promised no services would be provided at the location. He also said the house takes in young adults who want to be helped, not ones who are ordered to attend by a court.

"They are not criminals, they are victims," he said.

Brown, who could not be reached for comment Wednesday, has tried for at least six months to sell the warehouse. He was asking about \$4.37 million for the 17,000-square-foot space, and some reports say he will receive \$3 million to \$4 million from Covenant House.

The shelter will be home to at most 30 young adults ranging in age from 18 to 23. Those residents will be sent to Covenant House's service center on Telegraph Avenue for job-training and courses.

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