

Downtown's slate

Follow the money through the PAC maze to find PG&E and downtown's candidates

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PG&E'S AVALANCHE

PG&E has spent \$5.22 million attempting to defeat Proposition H, according to Sept. 30 filings made to the San Francisco Ethics Commission.

The money is being spent by Committee to Stop the Blank Check, a group that calls itself a "coalition of concerned consumers, small business, labor, and community organizers" but that is actually funded, with the exception of a single \$100 donation, entirely by Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

This is an unprecedented amount to spend against a local ballot measure, rivaled only by the big cash Lennar Corp. spent on the Prop F/G fight in June. With just 21 days left before San Franciscans go to the polls, there's no doubt the amount will increase significantly.

The money is being shunted to a bevy of political consultants, including at least \$52,500 to Forward Observer, a Sacramento group that played a role in the \$10 million campaign PG&E waged against the citizens of Yolo County in 2006 who were voting to leave the utility and join the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. Ethnic marketing specialists Imprinta Communications Group and their representatives also received at least \$329,000 for their efforts to spread "No on Prop. H" propaganda in media largely consumed by the city's Asian population. Imprinta also played a hand in the 2006 SMUD fight as well as the narrow defeat of the 2002 Prop. D measure — the last time public power was on the ballot in San Francisco. The group also holds the reins of the Golden State Leadership Fund PAC, in which PG&E has also dumped \$160,000.

But the bulk of the money — more than \$3.3 million — has gone to Storefront Political Media, the shop run by Eric Jaye, who also handles Mayor Gavin Newsom's politicking. (Amanda Witherell)

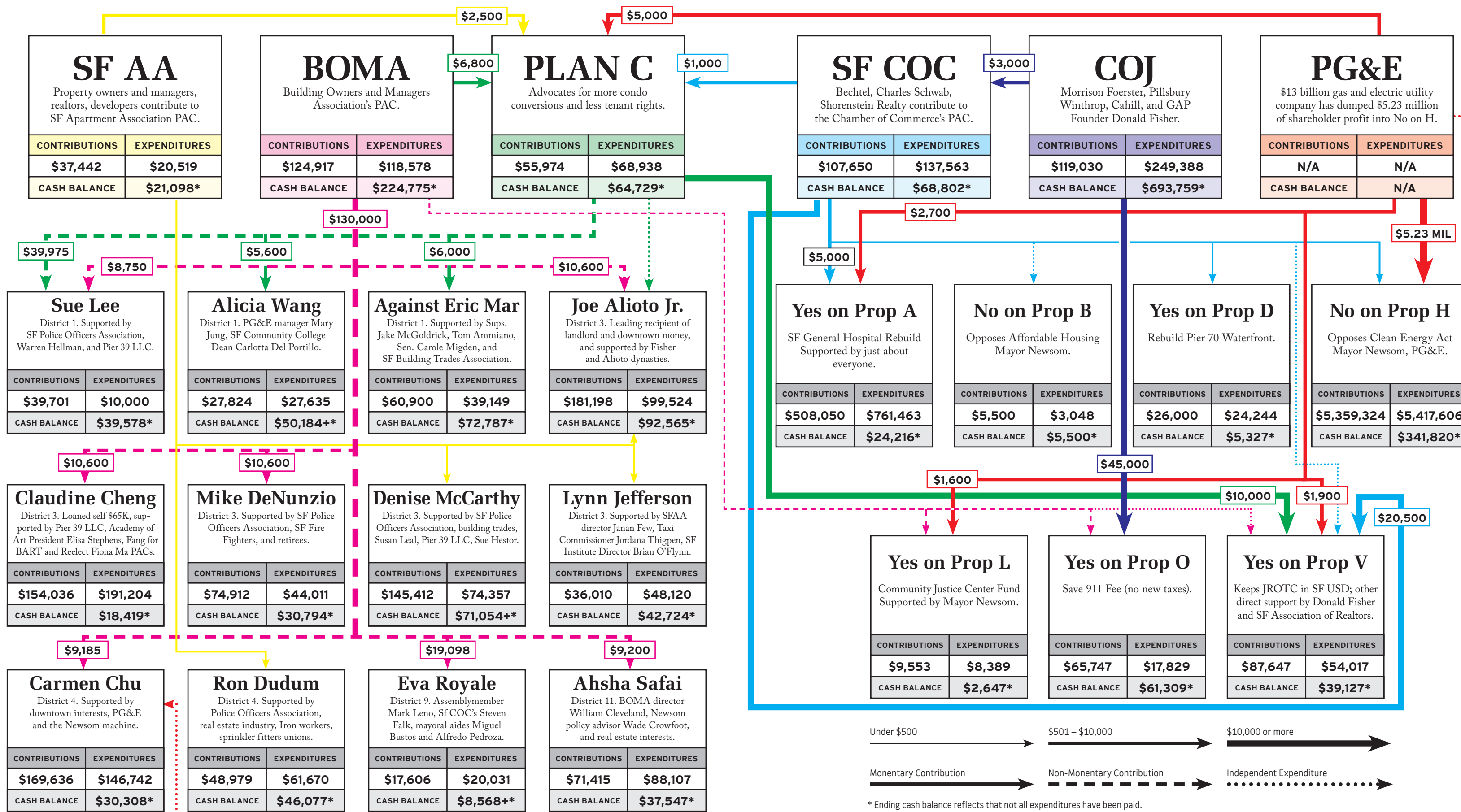
Reports filed with the city's campaign finance database show that six big downtown outfits — the San Francisco Apartment Association, the Building Owners and Managers Association, Plan C, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the Committee on Jobs, and Pacific Gas and Electric Co. — are spending millions to stop progressive candidates and measures and elect a pro-downtown, pro-landlord slate for

the Board of Supervisors. These political action committees (PACs) use their huge war chests in several strategically significant ways. They make direct monetary contributions to each other, with most paying directly into Plan C, which seems to stand for "Condo Conversion Complex" PAC. Almost \$20,000 has moved between these committees in recent months.

They directly fund local candidate and ballot committees, pay for independent billboards, mailers and postage, write ballot arguments, and host fundraisers for their preferred slate. The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) has spent \$130,000 to date promoting its candidates. They use Carmen Chu's image on \$11,500 worth of the No on H mailers. They have funneled \$63,000 into the into

the Yes on V campaign, which is being used against progressive candidate Eric Mar. You can follow the money yourself at www.sfgov.org/site/ethics_page.asp?id=74890 But with the next filing deadline set for Oct. 23, and some committees willing to pay late fines, much of what transpires won't be disclosed until after Nov. 4. The city maintains an updated list of independent

expenditures and electioneering or member communications at www.sfgov.org/site/ethics_page.asp?id=88183. These show massive amounts of late money being spent to support Sue Lee, Alicia Wang, Joe Alioto, Mike Denunzio, Chu, Eva Royale, and Ahsha Safai and oppose Mar. Stay tuned. And vote early and often. **SFBG** Color version available at www.sfbg.com



FOLLOWING THE LATE MONEY

Recent filings at the San Francisco Ethics Commission show that political action committees (PACs) representing downtown interests, some not included in our chart, are dropping increasingly large sums of money on their preferred slate of candidates.

A new PAC called SF Coalition for Responsible Growth, whose membership suggests that it's a splinter of the Residential Builders Association, has spent \$14,719 against D11 progressive John Avalos.

The San Francisco Police Officers Association has spent \$4,593 against Avalos, and \$2,296 in support of his opponent and Mayor Gavin Newsom favorite Ahsha Safai. The SFPOA also plunked down \$2,296 in support of Alicia Wang and Sue Lee in D1.

Lee seems to have picked up the most late money support in the past week: Plan C, a pro-landlord group, has thrown almost \$35,000 into supporting her.

Lee's progressive opponent, Eric Mar, has seen the Asian American Contractors Association pony up \$8,659 worth of full-page ads in the Chinese media opposing his candidacy, reportedly for comments he made during a school board meeting about the massive earthquake that hit China in May and that they feel implied that Chinese contractors do shoddy work. But Mar, who has consistently helped small minority contractors get work in the school district, said the attacks are smart tactics on the part of downtown business and real estate interests.

The San Francisco Realtors Association PAC, not depicted on this chart, has been paying for robocalls to hit Mar, along with fellow progressive candidates David Chiu in D3 and Avalos in D11, with the Karl Rove-like tactic of comparing them to D6 progressive Sup. Chris Daly. But as Daly points out, though all these PACs dropped a bundle to defeat him in 2006, he still got reelected. (Sarah Phelan)