INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency Commissioners
FROM: Fred Blackwell, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Media Clippings from 7/29/09 to 8/12/09

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

(Originated by Gia Casteel-Brown, Executive Assistant)

Fred Blackwell
Executive Director

MULTIPLE PROJECT AREAS:

Attachment 1: SF Examiner: “California Pulls a Fast One”, August 6, 2009


MISSION BAY:


Attachment 4: SF Business Times: “UCSF to cut $100M from Mission Bay Hospital Plan,” August 10, 2009

HPSY:

Attachment 5: SF Examiner: “City Plans Redevelopment Without the 49ers”, July 30, 2009

YERBA BUENA:

Attachment 7: Mayor’s Press Release: Redevelopment Agency Awards the Mexican Museum $250,000 in Grant Funds to Jump Start Plans for a New Home South of Market, August 6, 2009

CLOSED WESTERN ADDITION:

Attachment 8: SF Examiner: “City Still Trying to Jazz Up Fillmore”, August 5, 2009


Attachment 10: SF Gate.com: “J-Pop Explodes: New People Mall Opening in S.F.”, August 9, 2009

California pulls a fast one

According to a letter issued by City Controller Ben Rosenfeld on Tuesday, the state will be "borrowing" an estimated $81 million from property taxes collected by the City in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

The California Constitution allows the state to loan money to local government entities, provided the state agrees to pay back the borrowed amount. The state will pay for interest on the bonds up to about 8 percent.

Ideally, this could all be arranged in just a few months, allowing for seamless continuation of programs that depend on funding that's about to be hijacked.

Cities and counties did something similar in 2006 when the state took a portion of local vehicle license fees. According to the League of California Cities, however, this kind of thing costs little for the state.

For starters, the state is receiving more revenue out of the state's budget exists. $91 million will be coming right back to us (there may also be a way to finance about $10 million in redevol-

On the other hand, the new law puts repayment of the "loans" at a very high priority -- behind only education and general obligation bonds -- so investors wishing to bet on the reimbursement won't be completely laughed out of the boardroom.

The devil is in the details, of course, and those have to be worked out in the coming weeks. Hopefully this new law will mean that, of the $866 million the City is estimated to lose due to the state's budget cuts, $91 million will be coming right back to us (there may also be a way to finance about $10 million in redevelopers funded loans).

Using a financing trick to give the state a treat isn't ideal. But it may be the best we can do, so long as the state can take funds from counties like candy from a baby.

Crafty: A bit of financial trickery by the state helped solve the budget problem.

One more ballot measure: Brightening up mid-Market Street area

Last week, I wrote that the Board of Supervisors had elected to put four measures on the November ballot -- naming rights to Candlestick Park, an advertising limit on city property, additional aids for supervisors and changes to the budget process.

There is, however, one more measure that will be on the ballot: the mid-Market special sign district initiative. This time did not go through the Board of Supervisors, but received enough signatures to qualify for the November ballot.

In a nutshell, it calls for a new district to be established on Market Street between Fifth and Seventh streets. Big signs will then be permitted in the area in order to revitalize theaters and other businesses.

Though not permitted to be more than 500 square feet in size and subject to some other rules, video, rotating and projection signs would be allowed. A portion of revenue from the sale of big advertising space would be used to fund arts education programs for children in the Tenderloin and SoMa neighborhoods.

The measure is sponsored by Mid-Market ARTS, a coalition of neighborhood businesses and artists whose flier claims that lighting up the area like Times Square with new signs "combats blight by illuminating the streets during nighttime hours."
State should follow S.F. voters’ lead on big redevelopment

San Francisco Business Times

Friday, August 7, 2009

State should follow S.F. voters’ lead on big redevelopment

San Francisco Business Times

To borrow a line from the movie “Casablanca,” opponents of the Hunters Point Shipyard project are shocked — shocked! — that the massive San Francisco redevelopment involves a land swap between the city, state and a developer.

They shouldn’t be. And, just like in the movie, they’re really not. After all, when San Franciscans last year voted on Prop. G to enable the massive project, the land swap was no secret. It was on the ballot, and was one of the key facts that opponents focused on in their attempts to kill the project. It’s right there in their official ballot arguments — more than once.

Still, now that the state’s portion of the land swap has gone to Sacramento, Hunters Point detractors are grasping at the issue again, proclaiming themselves caught unawares. The fact that Senate Bill 792, sponsored by San Francisco Democrat Mark Leno, has largely the same opponents that last year attempted to torpedo Prop. G shows what’s really going on. This is a Hail Mary, a last-ditch effort to delay, deny or downsize an urban renewal plan that won the backing of more than 60 percent of San Francisco voters after a fulsome debate.

That doesn’t make 792 unimportant. It’s necessary because the land the developer would receive is 42 acres of parkland at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area. Park it is; untouched wilderness it’s not. Much of the section to be turned over to Lennar Corp. is bare dirt that’s used mainly as excess parking for Candlestick Park. You could say the wildest life that inhabits this portion is probably 49ers tailgaters a few Sundays per year. Lennar would pay market value, an estimated $40 million, which the state could use to maintain the remainder of the park — which is worth preserving — and the developer would donate to the city a roughly equal-sized slice of the Hunters Point shoreline to replace what’s lost from the park. It’s all a key element of allowing the nearly 8,000 condos (2,500 affordable) that Lennar plans at the site to go forward.

It is also the essence of an effective public-private partnership to produce affordable housing. Therein lies the problem: Hunters Point opponents object not just to this particular project, but to the concept itself. After all, the developer (the private end of the partnership) needs to get something out of the deal, and that’s just too much to stomach for San Francisco activists trained on years of anti-developer rhetoric. Last year, you’ll remember, Chris Daly and cohort sponsored a Trojan Horse alternative to Prop. G. It would have required 50 percent of the units at Hunters Point to be affordable to San Francisco’s poorest residents.

That this would have made the entire project financially infeasible, killing it at birth, was not beside the point, it was the point. In this view, the city should not lower itself to dealing with profit-compromised...
developers to provide more affordable housing for its residents. No, affordable housing should be a noble undertaking, one controlled and financed entirely by the public purse. (Where a cash-short city might come up with untold millions in unencumbered loot has never been specified).

Fortunately, voters saw this for what it was. State legislators need to do the same. For it may not seem so now, in the depths of a historic housing slump, but San Francisco’s homes shortage is not cyclical but structural. It will reemerge quickly once the economy improves.

In other words, (to paraphrase that old movie again), we’re going to need the thousands of homes from projects like Hunters Point: Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow — but soon, and for the rest of our lives.
Mission Bay is targeting $72 million in federal stimulus funds for infrastructure projects that backers say will build out a critical link between the Transbay Terminal and Hunters Point as well as help San Francisco’s life sciences enclave bridge a funding gap.

Shovel-ready projects for building hundreds of yards of roads, sidewalks and sewer pipe, including a key highway off-ramp, could open more Mission Bay parcels to development. That new development, supporters say, would unleash new waves of Mission Bay-specific tax-increment financing that typically funds infrastructure improvements but has slowed with the economic downturn.

Three Mission Bay projects from the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency are among 85 regional priorities highlighted by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute:

One application seeks $24.7 million in stimulus funds for $31 million in projects, including the Interstate 280 off-ramp onto Mariposa Street, which sweeps behind the University of California, San Francisco, hospital site and into the southern edge of Mission Bay. Other projects are the extension of Owens and Fourth streets through the hospital site and a network of streets that connect to 16th and Mariposa.

Another application requests $24.6 million to improve Terry Francois Boulevard, Illinois and Third streets and other roads around the FibroGen Inc. headquarters on Illinois. That work also would total $31 million and clear the way for two undeveloped sites designed for cleantech and medical office projects.

A third application for $23.8 million, through the state Water Resources Control Board and in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments, is for “urban greening” initiatives. The projects, which total about $34 million when local matches are included, are designed to replace paved parcels with open space, pervious pavement or retention systems and rely heavily on separate storm and sanitary sewer pipes and pump stations.

UCSF also has applied for stimulus funds for the site where it plans to build its $1.69 billion women’s, children’s and cancer hospital.

The former railyard and warehouse district is largely on its way to being built out as San Francisco’s life sciences hub, but large swaths remain undeveloped. Backers say stimulus money would push infrastructure projects ahead, allowing new development and, as a result, new tax-increment funds that could be dedicated to affordable housing.
“The fact that (Mission Bay is) half-done doesn’t mean we stop in our efforts,” said Michael Cohen, the city’s economic development chief. “There’s enough critical mass, but we need to make sure the infrastructure is in place.”

What’s more, city officials see Mission Bay as essential to developing a corridor from the Transbay Terminal to Hunters Point, where city officials have proposed a 2 million-square-foot cleantech campus. For developers in both of those districts to demand top-of-market commercial lease rates, for example, Mission Bay must be built out.

“It’s a classic supply-and-demand issue,” Cohen said.

Stimulus funds would flow from the federal government to the redevelopment agency.

**Farallon Capital Management**, the San Francisco hedge fund that bought Catellus’ interest in Mission Bay in 2004, oversees infrastructure work through its **Mission Bay Development Group**.

By being shovel-ready, job-intensive, urban-infill projects well served by different types of transportation, the Mission Bay applications could have an advantage over other stimulus projects nationally.

Regardless, projects are continuing. For one, Mission Bay Development Group is moving a 66-inch sewer line — essentially the local match in one stimulus application — that runs under the west side of the UCSF hospital site.

UCSF’s application for stimulus funds highlights a potential $200 million shortfall in state funding for the project. Plus, said Cindy Lima, executive director of the Mission Bay hospitals project, UCSF has collected about $220 million toward a $600 million fundraising goal.

“Every bit helps,” Lima said.

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UCSF to cut $100M from Mission Bay hospital plan

San Francisco Business Times - by Chris Rauber

UCSF Medical Center plans to slash another $100 million from the projected $1.686 billion price tag for its new women’s, children’s and cancer specialty hospital at Mission Bay, as UCSF, the University of California system and many would-be philanthropists face daunting fiscal challenges.

Officials told the Business Times the medical center has already shaved $200 million in projected spending that had previously pushed the Mission Bay project’s estimated price tag to nearly $1.9 billion.

On top of that, the medical center’s leadership “has mandated” a new budget target of $1.586 billion, said Cindy Lima, executive director of UCSF’s Mission Bay hospital project. “Our potential donors want to know we are doing everything possible to contain costs,” she said.

Some of the cost savings are likely to be achieved by the decrease in construction inflation and raw materials prices that have accompanied the economic slowdown. But Lima said her 100-strong team at the university’s Integrated Center for Design and Construction is also looking for savings both large and small throughout the project, adding that the discipline involved “is almost excruciating.”

For example, she said, UCSF has wrestled an estimated $800,000 out of the budget merely by changing specifications for the hinges on about 2,700 doors in the new complex.

Lima said UCSF won’t have a final handle on cost estimates for the Mission Bay hospital complex until next July, when bidding on the project is expected to be completed. Few specifics are available at this point, since the medical center has yet to pick many partners in the project. Anshen + Allen is the project’s outside architect; DPR Construction is its general contractor.

Stuart Eckblad, an in-house UCSF architect and its director of design and construction, said the medical center will be squeezing costs out of individual systems, like plumbing or heating and cooling, rather than slashing entire departments or units of the facility.

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City plans redevelopment without the 49ers

If team moves to Santa Clara, city officials are ready to move forward with intent to restore Hunters Point devoid of a stadium and instead hope to draw greentech businesses.  BY JOHN UPTON - EXAMINER STAFF WRITER

While the idea that the 49ers may be relocating to Santa Clara is spreading melancholy among San Francisco-based football fans, it's also creating uncertainty for The City's largest planned redevelopment project.

A new stadium demanded by the football franchise has long been planned as the anchor of a massive redevelopment project at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. The plans aim to construct office and research space, shops and up to 10,000 homes in a 770-acre swath of southeastern San Francisco.

And with more than a decade of construction scheduled to begin at the shipyard next year, the question hanging over the project is what to do with the 25-acre lot set aside for a stadium if the Miners decide to move out of town.

As a backup, city officials and developers are drafting contingency plans, which will be put in place if the team decides not to accept the shipyard playing venue.

One of those proposals is to build research and office space, especially for small companies that do business in emerging fields.

But the idea is not to draw just one large company into the area to replace the stadium as the project's anchor. So-called anchor projects can help redevelopment projects succeed by attracting visitors, vitality and industry.

A UC San Francisco campus is widely credited with helping ensure the success of the biotech- and housing-focused Mission Bay redevelopment project.

Egon Terplan, policy director at the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, said the shipyard redevelopment project could succeed without a large anchor.

"This is a very different kind of project from Mission Bay," Terplan said. "The 49ers stadium shouldn't be seen as analogous with the UCSF campus, because it wouldn't be used with the same frequency. I think the project would work without a specific anchor."

Instead, master developer Lennar Corp. and The City hope to attract multiple institutions to establish headquarters and operations at the site to help create a greentech industry hub, under one of the two stadium-free alternatives being considered, according to Michael Cohen, Mayor Gavin Newsom's chief economic adviser.

The fast-emerging greentech sector, which is sometimes called the cleantech sector, is filled with startup and diversifying companies that are developing technologies to help address environmental problems, such as climate change and freshwater shortages.

Demand for such technologies is being driven largely by the introduction and proposed introduction of environmental laws, such as caps on carbon emissions, in the U.S. and elsewhere.

A smaller greentech hub is planned if the stadium is built.

"We would love to get a number of regional universities to come together — our strategy is to put together collaborations," Cohen said.

"You can't micromanage it. The market and technology is going to be pushing in directions you can't even imagine now."

Even with the stadium, the greentech industry will likely be a large part of the redevelopment.

Existing plans include more than 2 million square feet of office and research space targeted at companies in the greentech and related high-tech sectors.

Without a stadium, one of the two alternatives being explored by Lennar would see the office-and-research space doubled to 5 million square feet, according to Lennar Vice President Kofi Bonner, who is overseeing the project.

"There's a tendency for those kinds of companies to want to come together in a..."
Homebuilding ready to begin in Parcel A

Construction of new homes in the first patch of the shipyard that’s slated to be redeveloped is expected to begin in the coming months.

Most of the former Navy shipyard still requires extensive environmental cleanup before the Navy will transfer ownership to The City for redevelopment purposes.

The cleanest slab of the shipyard, however, which is in the middle of the site and is known as Parcel A, was relatively uncontaminated and it has already been conveyed to The City.

Construction of 1,400 homes on the 66-acre Parcel A is expected to take up to five years to complete.

Lennar expects to complete preparatory work on Parcel A by the end of this year, and then it will commence construction of 83 homes that will constitute two-neighborhood blocks within the project, according to spokesman Jason Barnett.

Those homes might be ready to be lived in by late 2011 or in early 2012, according to Barnett.

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Stadium or no stadium?

The plan is to build a new stadium at the old Hunters Point shipyard, but there are also plans ready in the event the team moves away.

Preferred plan:

- New 49ers stadium built in the heart of the shipyard on a 25-acre block of land called Parcel G

Alternative plans:

- Office and research space built on Parcel G to increase overall commercial space in the redevelopment project
- Homes built on Parcel G to reduce building heights and housing density elsewhere in the project

Source: Lennar Corp.

-- John Upton

A major project

Latest redevelopment plans for the shipyard and Candlestick Point:

$2 billion

Estimated cost of project

770 acres

Development area

11,900

Housing units slated to be built

700,000 square feet

Planned retail space

300 acres

Parkland and trails

Source: Sager Associates Public Relations

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Transportation, pollution still sticking points for the Niners

A low-rate for a new stadium in Hunters Point may not be enough to overcome the area's biggest problems — pollution and transportation.

In a bid to woo the 49ers to the shipyard instead of Santa Clara, The City is offering a 31-year lease of the proposed stadium site, while master developer Lennar Corp. is offering to fund $100 million of anticipated redevelopment profits into stadium construction efforts.

Santa Clara voters are set to decide early next year whether their city should spend $814 million to help build a $807 million 49ers stadium in time for the 2014 season next to the Great American Ballpark — the team's stated preferred new home.

The team's training and administration facilities are already located in the Silicon Valley city.

Additionally, the franchise has long been telling San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom that the shipyard ranks low on its list of potential new Bay Area homes because of transportation and pollution problems.

"As you know," team owner John York wrote Newsom in a Jan. 3, 2007 letter, "we undertook a detailed study of Hunters Point (Shipyard) a couple of years ago, and concluded that the site had two serious problems."

The problems, York said, were the proposed site's long distance from major freeways and the uncertainty over the Navy's ongoing cleanup of the heavily polluted former shipyard.

In a more recent letter to Newsom, dated May 13, 2009, York commended the ongoing shipyard cleanup work, but he said "the transportation concerns that we outlined two years ago remain unresolved.

These concerns would also plague any large development aimed at businesses that are proposed to be a backup if the stadium is not constructed in the redevelopment project.

-- John Upton

Big obstacles: Niners' owner John York wrote Mayor Gavin Newsom May 13 that pollution and transportation issues could prevent the team from staying in The City.

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If the attraction of businesses to the shipyard site does not pan out as a viable option, there is also the plan to build houses on the stadium site.

That proposal would see 1,500 homes currently planned at the current Candlestick Point site instead be built sooner than planned at the proposed site of the new stadium, according to Bonner.

Environmental cleanup of the 25-acre proposed stadium site has been prioritized over surrounding shipyard land, and it's expected to be ready for infrastructure and grading work next year.

The other alternative being pursued would see building heights and density reduced in a southern chunk of the redevelopment project.

"You don't add to the number of homes — you just reduce the number on this (Candlestick Point) site," Bonner said.

As a result, discounted leasing rates and other attractive commercial terms would be critical to ensuring the success of the proposal, according to Koechlin.

Bonner agreed. "The City would probably have to put in some incentivized programming to attract these kinds of businesses," he said.
Niners reveal rejected stadium plans

By John Upton
San Francisco Staff Writer

Before settling on a site next to the Great American Ballpark, the San Francisco 49ers considered other Bay Area sites for a new stadium, some of which would have been preferred if the Santa Clara plan founders. San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and other city officials tried to convince the 49ers to relocate from Candlestick Park to a new stadium to be built on the site of the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, where a 770-acre redevelopment project is planned. The team rejected the idea, saying transportation and environmental cleanup issues identified at the site have not been resolved by the City. Santa Clara residents are expected to vote next year on whether to fund the team build its $857 million stadium.

Home-field disadvantages
Sites for a potential new stadium that were surveyed by the 49ers, and the reason each was originally rejected:

- Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, San Francisco
  - The site contains hazardous materials and it’s not easily accessible by freeways or public transit.
- Candlestick Point, S.F.
  - Residents voted last year to use the site for housing, shops and parks when it passed Measure G, which approved Candlestick Point redevelopment plans.
- Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, unincorporated Santa Clara County
  - The former Polo Fields site is too small and isolated.
- Santa Clara Fairgrounds, unincorporated Santa Clara County
  - The site is too small and isolated.
- San Jose, warehouse waterfront, S.F.
  - The site is difficult to access by public transit and is too small for large events.
- Baylands, Redwood City
  - The landowners, Universal Paragon Corp., said a stadium would be incompatible with redevelopment plans.
- S.F. International Airport, San Mateo County
  - Endangered garter snakes are present and San Francisco, 49er officials considered the site for housing, shops and parks when it passed Measure G.

Future playing field: A rendering depicts the 49ers' proposed stadium in Santa Clara, which even the airport, said it didn’t want a stadium built on vacant land at the site.

San Francisco 49ers considered other Bay Area sites for a new stadium, some of which would have been preferred if the Santa Clara plan founders.

By John Upton
San Francisco Staff Writer

When voters go to the polls in November, there’ll be a decision on city revenue streams — but not in such a direct manner as taxes.

City leaders gave up on the idea of a citywide bond measure for the ballot in May, and voters were also expected to see the city’s property tax rate cut by about 15 cents per $100 of valuation. Taxes were explored as a way to offset a reduction in state funding or The City’s own decline in revenues during the fiscal year.

Two of four measures that made it on the ballot, however, could have an impact on city revenue and spending.

One would prohibit the expansion of advertising on street furniture or city-owned buildings beyond current levels and the other would allow members of the Board of Supervisors to hire more than two legislative aides.

Both measures were introduced by former Supervisor Jake McGoldrick, who was termed out of office last year.

The measure restricting advertising would “affect the ability of some public agencies to generate additional revenue,” City Controller Ben Rosenfeld said in his analysis of the ballot measures. The Municipal Transportation Agency, which oversees Muni, allows advertising on a portion of transit shelters and it generates more than $85 million annually, according to Rosenfeld.

Voters will see no taxes or fees, but ballot could hit city’s bottom line

By Joshua Shafiroff
San Francisco Staff Writer

Two local ballot measures could have an impact on city revenue.

Eliminating the restriction of two legislative aides per supervisor “would not in and of itself affect the cost of government,” he said. “The number of staff members would become subject to the norm.”

The “total cost of the 22 positions is approximately $23 million annually, including salary and benefits,” Rosenfeld said.

The measure allowing supervisors to hire more than two legislative aides ranges from $68,300 to $91,500 a year.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, August 6, 2009
Contact: Mayor’s Office of Communications,
415-554-6131

*** PRESS RELEASE ***

REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AWARDS THE MEXICAN MUSEUM
$250,000 IN GRANT FUNDS TO JUMP START PLANS FOR A NEW
HOME SOUTH OF MARKET

The San Francisco Arts Commission will Manage Funds and Collaboratively Develop and
Implement a Predevelopment Plan for the Re-launched Museum

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – On Tuesday, August 4, at a packed public hearing, the San Francisco
Redevelopment Agency voted unanimously to approve $280,000 in funding to provide assistance to the
Mexican Museum as it begins predevelopment planning for its new home, located adjacent to Jessie Square in
the Yerba Buena Cultural District. The San Francisco Arts Commission will manage the disbursement of
$250,000 to the Museum and will retain $30,000 for its fiscal oversight and consulting assistance. The Arts
Commission will play a key role in implementing the predevelopment plan, which includes specific
performance milestones related to facility planning, fundraising, membership and capacity building of the
Museum’s Board of Trustees, and partnerships with other key institutions.

“The City of San Francisco has always taken great pride in its cultural diversity and this renewed support for the
Mexican Museum will lay the groundwork for a future world-class museum of Latino and Mexican art, serving
as a capstone to the Yerba Buena Cultural District.” said Mayor Gavin Newsom.

Since the early 1990s, the Redevelopment Agency has been working with the Museum toward the development
of a new facility. While earlier planning focused on a “stand-alone” building, current efforts are centered on a
new mixed-use project that includes 706 Mission Street and consists of a residential tower incorporating both
the landmark Mercantile Building and the Museum.

“The Mexican Museum is the final piece of the Redevelopment Agency’s plan for the Yerba Buena
Redevelopment District. With the recent changes in the Museum’s Board and the leadership it has
demonstrated, we feel that we are now well positioned to move forward with predevelopment planning for this
important project,” said Executive Director of the Redevelopment Agency Fred Blackwell.

“The collection of the Mexican Museum is of national and international importance and will draw visitors to
our City, and the unanimous vote by the Commissioners of the Redevelopment Agency last night demonstrated
strong support for re-launching the Museum,” said Luis R. Cancel, Director of Cultural Affairs. “I look forward
to working with the new Board leadership of the Mexican Museum to help this organization reach its full
potential.”
The Museum had a great show of support, requiring an additional room to handle the overflow. Supporters from San Francisco’s Latino and artists communities delivered compelling testimony in favor of the Mexican Museum. Collectively, they expressed the importance of an institution that reflects and celebrates Latino history and culture in a city that is home to such culturally-specific museums as the Contemporary Jewish Museum, Asian Art Museum and the Museum of the African Diaspora. Their voices were echoed by well-respected community leaders and arts professionals including: Miguel Bustos; former Mexican Museum Executive Director and SFAC Commissioner Lorraine García Nakata; Adriana Williams, the granddaughter of Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles who donated the important Covarrubias Collection to the Museum; former Trustee Jesse Aguirre and Palo Alto Art Center Curator Signe Mayfield.

“The Mexican Museum is elated at the unanimous approval by the San Francisco Redevelopment Commissioners for the release of these funds to give us the impetus to move forward and kick off our revival fundraising, which we’ve appropriately titled the ‘Renacimiento: The Mexican Museum Today’ campaign,” said Mario Diaz, co-chair of the Mexican Museum’s Board of Trustees. “We are proud to continue the vision of Peter Rodriguez, who founded the Museum in 1975, and further its important and dedicated mission.”

The Mexican Museum holds a unique collection of over 12,000 objects, including painting, sculpture, and folk art, representing thousands of years of Mexican art and culture within the Americas. The permanent collection, the Museum's most important asset and resource, includes five collecting areas: Pre-Conquest; Colonial; Popular; Modern and Contemporary Mexican and Latino; and Chicano Art. The Museum also has an impressive number of rare books and a growing collection of Latin American art.

The Palo Alto Art Center recently announced Treasures from The Mexican Museum: A Spirited Legacy (on view September 26, 2009- April 18, 2010), an exhibition featuring works from the Museum’s collection. The exhibition will provide a much-needed back drop to support the Museum’s fundraising efforts.

###
City still trying to jazz up Fillmore

By: John Upton
Examiner Staff Writer
August 5, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO — High-end jazz restaurants in the low-income Fillmore district are pouring money into marketing efforts in hopes of increasing interest in the floundering businesses.

The promotions have cost $50,000 in public funds, and $35,000 more is set to be spent on a logo, marketing slogan and banners.

The Fillmore was home to the West Coast’s most vibrant jazz scene until redevelopment efforts in the 1950s and 1960s devastated music venues.

Since 1995, city and redevelopment officials have tried to bring jazz back to the area through a $15 million campaign funded by redevelopment profits.

The efforts have focused heavily around the subsidized opening of four jazz-themed restaurants on Fillmore Street: Rasselas Jazz Club, Sheba Piano Lounge, 1300 on Fillmore and Yoshi’s Jazz Club and Restaurant.

But the businesses have struggled because of marketing problems and because they’re generally too expensive for the low-income area, city consultants reported in May. That prompted officials to pour $3.3 million more into the eateries through low-interest loans.

That money had been earmarked to convert an abandoned Muni substation on Fillmore Street into a jazz facility.

City-led efforts to convince SFJAZZ to use the substation for concerts and festivals failed because the building was too small for the nonprofit, and it plans to build a jazz facility in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, according to Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Fred Blackwell.

Earlier this year, the Redevelopment Agency hired Traina Public Relations to help promote the Fillmore Street restaurants.

The $49,999 contract covered $24,000 in public relations fees, $10,500 in print advertising and $1,000 to dine journalists to help promote the restaurants, agency documents show.

On Tuesday, agency commissioners unanimously voted to increase the contract by $35,000.

Finding a niche: Yoshi’s Jazz Club and Restaurant is one of several high-end restaurants that are struggling in the Fillmore district, which is home to many low-income residents. (eXaminer file photo)
That money will pay for a new brand name and logo for the Fillmore district and for production of promotional banners, agency documents show.

Blackwell said the branding campaign will benefit the entire corridor, and he’s optimistic that the restaurants will succeed.

“These restaurants are important for the economic vitality of the corridor,” Blackwell said. “What we’re doing is supporting those restaurants, supporting the corridor and fortifying our original investments [in the restaurants].”

### Keeping the jazz alive in San Francisco

Redevelopment Agency allots more money for Fillmore restaurant advertising:

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<th>Service</th>
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<td>Public relations services</td>
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<td>Design and production of street banners</td>
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<td>Development of a logo and slogan for district</td>
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<td>Producing and running print advertisements</td>
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Source: Redevelopment Agency

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As manga mogul Seiji Horibuchi prepares for the launch of his latest venture, a media center/retail concept in San Francisco dubbed "New People" -- he explains to Jeff Yang why America, or at least the Bay Area, is ready for the mainstreaming of J-pop

Pop culture pioneer Seiji Horibuchi fondly recalls his first encounter with the more exotic elements of Japanese pop-culture. It was back in the mid-60s; he'd just finished fourth grade, and his parents had promised him a special treat.

"We lived in Tokashima, on Shikoku Island near Osaka," says Horibuchi, CEO of Viz Pictures and the founder of New People and the J-Pop Center Project. "Even though it was a small town, there were four or five theaters, and I begged my parents to take me to a movie." They relented, and Horibuchi was escorted into his first cinematic experience, which turned out to be the classic omnibus horror film "Kwaidan" (1964).

Horibuchi remembers it as an eerie but mesmerizing immersion into a weird and wonderful parallel world.

"It was very beautiful, and very, very scary," he laughs. "I was only 10 years old and too young for it, but there were no such thing as movie ratings, so anyone could go to any show. Parents back then would take their kids to see some very unusual movies."

That early exposure to Japanese film had a deeper impact on the young Horibuchi than his parents knew. Not only did it spark his lifelong fascination with the cinema ("I was hooked -- I loved everything, from horror movies to comedy to Godzilla"), it also whetted his appetite for strange horizons.

Upon graduating with a law degree from prestigious Waseda University, Horibuchi tossed his career plans aside and bought himself a ticket to San Francisco: "I had no plans, no job, no friends in the U.S.," he says. "I didn't even bother to go to my graduation ceremony!"

That spontaneous visit has now lasted more than 34 years, during which Horibuchi -- founder of the leading English-language anime and manga distributor Viz, launched a $3 billion industry that has shaped the tastes and aesthetics of an entire generation of young Americans.

Now, Horibuchi is convinced that the time is right to take America's love affair with Japanese pop culture to the next level.

"There is something unique about J-pop -- it has a 'cuteness' and 'coolness' that can't be found anywhere else," he says. "But it goes beyond the superficial visual aspect of things; there's an inspirational, intuitive side to our pop culture that even Japanese people are not able to explain. And what I realized is that anime and manga are just..."
After three decades of building Viz from four-man startup to formidable publishing and video upstart with over 150 employees, hit titles like "One Piece," "Bleach," "Naruto" and, of course, "Pokemon," and annual revenues in excess of $100 million, Horibuchi is leaving his role as chairman of the company, to launch a new retail destination venture in San Francisco, New People, that intends to bring Japanese pop culture's other elements -- cinema, fashion, arts and design -- surging into the breach made by anime and manga.

Hello, Cool World

It might seem unwise to jump from a steadily profitable ship into a risky new endeavor in the midst of a global recession, but it's par for the course for Horibuchi, who's always been unable to resist the temptation to explore new worlds.

He says his decision to move to the U.S. was inspired by a brief student trip to the Bay Area, when he became entranced by his psychedelic surroundings. "I was totally shocked by it -- New Age, the hippies, people taking LSD," he says. "I thought it was amazing! And I decided immediately that I would come here, that Japan was boring and I needed to be a part of this new world."

Telling his parents he was going to America to pursue graduate studies, he jumped on a plane and ended up in Berkeley. For the next 10 years, Horibuchi immersed himself in the long moment, experimenting with and experiencing communal living, the music scene, and the hippie lifestyle -- in his words, "I was in outer space. I didn't know what was happening in Japan, I didn't even know what was happening in America. I wasn't interested in anything that wasn't inside my own head."

By the time Horibuchi came out of his foray into the counterculture, the world -- and in particular, Japan -- had changed dramatically. It was 1985, and the nation of his birth was evolving from a scrappy manufacturer of cheap radios to a globe-shuddering economic power. And the budding popular culture he remembered from his youth had blossomed into a Technicolor wonderland, every bit as psychedelic as the underground from which he'd emerged.

"Back when I was a child, I remember spending hours at rental shops where you could read graphic novels -- what they called gekiga -- for five cents a day per book," he says. "They were very dark and gloomy, and you would have an old lady sitting there staring at you, waiting for you to pay. Nothing fancy. But the manga industry had evolved and developed so rapidly; it had started to really explode, and become the 'king' of Japanese pop."

A chance encounter with Masahiro Oga, president of Japan's leading publisher Shogakukan (and grandson of the company's founder) offered Horibuchi the opportunity he sought. Oga was in the Bay Area looking to make a deal with Lucasfilm to produce what would be Japan's first 3D animated feature, a retelling of China's ancient Monkey King legend. After many meetings, Oga was convinced it would be too expensive, and halted negotiations with Lucasfilm's computer animation division.

(A few years later, Oga was contacted about buying that division -- called Pixar -- outright; he declined, only to see it purchased by Steve Jobs. "It makes me wonder what would have happened if Oga says yes!" laughs Horibuchi. "Maybe you could call it a missed opportunity.")
But Oga didn't walk away entirely empty-handed. Horibuchi, who'd gotten a gig translating for Oga during the discussions, proposed that Shogakukan fund a startup to translate Japanese comics into English for release in the U.S. Oga liked the idea, and cut him a check for $200,000.

With that initial stake, Horibuchi founded Viz Comics in a small office South of Market. "I had no education in business at all," he says. "I had no business plan, I didn't know how to keep books; the whole thing was just, 'Let's do it, see what happens.'"

I Choose You!

Though Viz grew steadily from those humble beginnings -- in fact, it had a momentary brush with the big time when Carolco Pictures, fresh off of a huge payday for "Terminator 2: Judgment Day," optioned Viz's manga series "Mai the Psychic Girl" for adaptation as a movie musical by Tim Burton and the New Wave band Sparks -- the company's rise as an entertainment world player came on the back of a little yellow mouse powered by static cling.

"The breakthrough was Pokemon," says Horibuchi. "The rights to the media -- the animation, the movies, the books, everything -- was controlled by Shogakukan. In 1998, it was already a huge hit in Japan, but no one had heard about it in the U.S. And I was already running around the world, tying up licenses, because I knew it was going to be our big chance."

Pokemon remains astoundingly profitable for Viz, having established itself as not a momentary fad but an evergreen franchise, renewing itself as each wave of new kids enters its sweet spot (about age 5 to 12). This resilience pointed Horibuchi toward an interesting realization.

"Pokemon's popularity has remained strong now for a whole decade," he points out. "It's not going away. And today you have a generation of young people who played Pokemon when they were kids, then started reading manga and watching anime, and now, having kids of their own. As those kids grow up, what do you think they're sharing with their kids? 'You have to watch Dragonball -- I loved this as a kid!' We've seen a whole 'manga-anime' generation grow up in the U.S., and we're now seeing a second one being raised."

The difference is that this second "manga-anime generation" -- let's call them "Jaspirationals" -- have never grown up knowing anything else; it's no longer exotic or different, it's their norm, their native language.

"This is a generation that is getting more and more interested in parts of J-pop beyond manga and anime -- fashion, movies, design, architecture, art," he says. "They're a new kind of people."

A Breed Apart

The term in Japanese for "new kind of people" is shinjinrui, which, coincidentally, was the name applied to a generation of Japanese who came of age during the 1970s and '80s -- a generation that had only known prosperity without sacrifice, and was driven to prioritize world travel and the accumulation of new experiences rather than toil as corporate drones. (It's the generation to which Horibuchi belongs, in fact -- which may explain both his global sensibilities and his nontraditional career path.)
This generation of Americans who are growing up Jaspirational — who gravitate to the "cuteness" and "coolness" of J-pop, the *kawaii* and *kakko-ii* — shares some traits with the Shinjinrui. They have a similar desire for novelty and an outward-facing cultural focus. And though America’s "new people" are growing up in a world that’s far more uncertain and insecure than the Shinjinrui of Japan, this has only pushed them to look farther afield for inspiration and creative stimulus. Their cocoon is the Web, not the home. And their interest in new experiences seems to be recession-proof. Or so Horibuchi hopes.

On Aug. 15, his newest undertaking, called simply New People, will open its 20,000 square-foot retail destination and media arts center at 1746 Post Street in the heart of San Francisco’s Japantown.

Press releases describe it as a hybrid attraction-art installation, a four-story plus basement edifice wrapped around a state-of-the-art 143-seat movie theater (Horibuchi has never been able to ditch his love of cinema, and in fact has also launched a separate distribution company, Viz Pictures, that is releasing a steady stream of live-action Japanese movies theatrically and to home video). It has a gallery, Superfrog, which will display Japanese pop art. It has a floor hosting four of Japan’s most interesting boutique fashion lines, including "Gothic Lolita" designers Baby the Stars Shine Bright. And it has New People: The Store, which offers hundreds of exclusive Japanese imported apparel, accessory, toy, design and furnishing finds from cool/obscure brands like Fewmany, Giraffe, Q-pot and SIWA. The whole thing will be unveiled as part of the first annual "J-Pop Summit," featuring bands, fashion shows, movie premieres and more -- an event expected to draw 20,000 people.

All of this wasn’t cheap: The New People center cost $15 million to build, funded largely by Horibuchi’s old benefactor Masahiro Oga at Shogakukan, and Horibuchi admits it’s a risk.

"We’ll know in six months if this will be a success," he says. "But if it works, we will bring it to other cities. New York, Paris, London. And I believe we will succeed. Because this generation of new people -- they are curious, they’re experimental, they’re open to the rest of the world, and to unfamiliar ideas. So doing this makes sense."

For Horibuchi, the launch has a distinctly nostalgic flavor. "I feel the way I did back when Viz began, when we didn’t know anything and just did what we felt was best," he says. "The scale is much bigger at this point. But it reminds me of those early days, and look how far we’ve come. It’s all old, and it’s all new, too."

PopMail

One significant consequence of the opening of the New People center will likely be a rise in traffic to, and awareness of, Nihonmachi -- San Francisco’s Japantown. It’s the oldest and largest in the country, although the competition is slim: There are only three "official" Japantowns in the U.S., all in California (San Jose and Los Angeles are the other two).

These communities have faced sociological, political and economic challenges over the past decade. There’s been little to no new immigration from Japan to the U.S. -- about 7,000 Japanese migrate here each year, though this number is offset by older immigrant Japanese Americans who’ve migrated back to Japan -- and as new generations of Japanese Americans are born, the traditions and cultural ties binding the ethnic community together inevitably loosen. Meanwhile, development interests have stepped up incursions into the neighborhood, diluting Nihonmachi’s unique visual stamp. As Nichibei Times editor Wayne Tada wrote in a July 17 essay titled...
"So Dad Ň WhereÕs the Japantown You Told Us About?," the net result could well be the erasure of Japantown from both the physical and cultural landscape of the Bay Area. "The neighborhood ... now faces near extinction by real estate interests that are apparently insensitive to JapantownÕs history and the cultural impact of failing to preserve a real vestige of a Japantown in San Francisco," he writes.

The stakes around New People are high, not just for Horibuchi's venture, but for its surrounding neighborhood. "There's definitely room for it," says San Francisco Japantown Foundation board member Keith Kamisugi. "The success of Hotel Tomo's renovation is largely based on its J-pop theme. And when New People opens, Japantown will benefit from a new influx of visitors -- many of them non-Asian."

At the same time, it's unsettling to think that the future of such a historically important Japanese American enclave may rest solely on its affiliation with imported pop culture. Kamisugi admits that we need to "rethink the desire to link Japanese pop culture with Japanese Americans just because of our ethnicity ... The popularity of Honda cars in this country doesn't impact how the country views Japanese Americans -- and it shouldn't." J-pop offers the enclave an economic lifeline, and a way to drive foot traffic, but Nihonmachi won't be well served if it becomes nothing more than an otaku tourism destination -- a sort of Akihabara-by-the-Bay.


http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2009/08/06/apop080609.DTL
J-Pop explodes: New People mall opening in S.F.
Beth Hughes, Special to The Chronicle
Sunday, August 9, 2009

Pop goes Japantown.

New People, the nation's first retail and entertainment complex dedicated to Japanese popular culture, opens on Post Street on Saturday.

J-Pop, as its friends call it, is all about the cultural phenomena that are comic books, animated films, movies, music and riotous up-from-the-street fashions.

Now, after 30-some years of simmering in the United States - who doesn't know Hello Kitty? - J-Pop has hit a full, rolling boil. And Seiji Horibuchi, the founder and CEO of San Francisco's VIZ Pictures and Viz Media, one of the first importers and translators of manga, or comic books, called it when he decided to embark on the New People J-Pop project four years ago.

His vision is realized in a $15 million, 20,000-square-foot project in a three-story building with a transparent glass facade that will reveal a taste of Tokyo's giddy controlled chaos within.

Designed by the Japanese architectural firm Torafu as a giant art installation, there's a subterranean cinema (all Japanese contemporary movies, all the time) with a concession offering Blue Bottle Coffee and organic snacks from Delica.

A retail operation called New People, The Store occupies the ground floor. Upstairs, Horibuchi installed boutiques for some of Tokyo's hottest J-Pop fashion labels from the trendy Harajuki district - Baby, The Stars Shine Bright, Black Peace Now, 6%DokiDoki and Sou-Sou, which sells updated versions of jikatabi, the traditional split-toe workers' shoe.

Manga's influence

Topping it off is the Superfrog Gallery, on the third floor, showcasing the work of artists inspired by Japanese pop culture. First up, Yoshitaka Amano, who designed the characters for the video game Final Fantasy.

Why is this J-Pop's U.S. moment?

"If you're in your teens or early 20s, it's hard to miss manga and anime," says Frederik L. Schodt, the Bay Area author of "Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics." If you're outside the demographic cohort that grew up on Gundam and Pokémon, you're quite possibly a parent or grandparent or unrelated adult who shared viewing time, if not game time. Chances are, some J-Pop stuck with you.
Thus, more and more people realized that "manga and anime are fun, and they're interesting. If it weren't interesting and fun, it wouldn't have gone anywhere," says Schodt, who was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette by the Japanese government in June for his work popularizing manga and anime outside Japan. "It's not like there was an open door for this. The early fans had to really struggle to get hold of what they wanted."

Today, there's so much anime, or animated film, on television and cable networks that Web sites like Anime on TV maintain up-to-date showtimes, episode synopses and reviews. Wal-Mart and the big chain bookstores sell anime and manga. There's even a New York Times best-seller list for manga; titles from Viz Comics are almost always on it.

San Francisco's Asian Art Museum saluted Tezuka Osamu, the creator of Astro Boy, with a show called "The Marvel of Manga" in 2007. Moviemakers are also embracing J-Pop. Hayao Miyazaki's latest, "Ponyo," opens Friday with Tina Fey, Matt Damon and Cate Blanchett voicing characters in the goldfish fairy tale.

**Bringing back customers**

Which brings us back to what's happening in Japantown, an ethnic enclave that even its boosters agree needs a boost. J-Pop established a significant presence several years ago when a Best Western emerged from a makeover by its new owner, San Francisco's Joie de Vivre Hospitality, as Hotel Tomo, a colorful tribute to J-Pop's verve.

Richard Hashimoto, president of the Japantown Merchants Association, sees New People as a way to recapture young customers, dissatisfied after Japantown Bowl closed in 2001.

He's ready for the reboot. He watched "Astro Boy" and "Speed Racer" on TV as a kid, "and it's amazing to see how it's revived. ... I'm excited."

Beyond the anime and manga mania, the blast of Tokyo retail will be very hard to ignore. New People, The Store is an almost curated assemblage of goods including Fewmany's collectible figures, Q-Pot jewelry, Giraffe neckties, stationery and ergonomic items for home and office, with many items available for the first time outside Japan.

"It represents the whole spectrum of Japanese pop culture," says Horibuchi. "We want our customers to have a true Tokyo shopping experience."

Rounding it out are the J-Pop fashion boutiques, all of which will offer items sized for Western physiques. (If you want to be big in Japan and you're not a band, be a U.S. size 10.)

Sou-Sou, the split-toe shoemaker, is the first of a planned cavalcade of merchants who will set up shop for just a few months. CEO and designer Takeshi Wakabayashi says the company, which gets orders for both its handmade shoes and the special socks worn with them from outside Japan via its Web site, plans on staying at least six months.

**Harajuku's greatest hits**

Baby, The Stars Shine Bright opted in after the 2004 movie "Kamikaze Girls" ("Shimotsuma Monogatari")

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became a cult hit outside Japan. A main character wore only clothing from the company founded in 1988 and named after a song by Everything But the Girl. That increased non-Japanese interest in its kawaii (cute) look, according to Fumiyo Isobe, one of the founders. Known as Sweet Lolita, it's created around pastel colors, cute fantasy princess and floral prints, and a profound appreciation of the more rococo aspects of Victorian and Edwardian girls' clothing.

Asuka Hagiwara, general manager of Black Peace Now, said the company realized the overseas demand for its Gothic Lolita look three years ago at the Japan Expo in France. Horibuchi chose almost that exact moment to propose they open a shop at New People. "We were intrigued by the idea and decided to proceed," said Hagiwara in an e-mail.

Gothic Lolita resembles Sweet Lolita but with a darker palette of dark blues, purples and black that continues right through to makeup and accessories. Cross jewelry and other religious symbols make the Gothic Lolita goth, as do bags and purses shaped like bats or coffins.

Countering those somber tones is 6%DokiDoki, a leading light in decora, immediately recognizable because of its vivid colors and whimsical gaiety inspired by dolls and toys. Think stars, hearts and circus animal motifs, big lamé bow clips arrayed in customized looks. "It makes the person wearing the style and the surrounding people happy," Sebastian Matsuda, the company director, said in an e-mail.

To keep U.S. customers from crossing that fine pink line separating cute from clownish, 6%DokiDoki is pulling out all the stops, even as it presents the "Sensational Kawaii" line as a San Francisco exclusive. Matsuda says employees "will act as guides to the 6%DokiDoki outlook on the world and make it easier to understand and figure out."

This article has been corrected since it appeared in print editions.

Visiting new people

1746 Post St. (between Webster and Buchanan), San Francisco. Boutiques open 11 a.m.-7 p.m. daily. For a schedule of New People opening events, including the J-Pop Summit Festival co-chaired by Hello Kitty, go to newpeopleworld.com.

Beth Hughes has lived and worked in Japan, where a career highlight was interviewing Hello Kitty at her world headquarters. E-mail comments to style@sfchronicle.com.


This article appeared on page N - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle

Change by design is the new reality that Fillmore neighborhood residents old and new are coming to terms with. For long time residents the landscape and the population has changed. For the influx of new residents Fillmore looks promising. Yoshi’s the crowning jewel of the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District, along with 1300 on Fillmore, and the Fillmore Heritage Center have joined the Fillmore Center and the nearby mall as the final structural facilities designed to revitalize the area.

Established in 1948, the agency, implemented projects authorized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to improve and redevelop blighted city neighborhoods. Once the projects began in the Western Addition, the process proved arduous and painful. Litigation, displacement, demolition, demonstrations and new laws resulted from lessons learned.

In January 2009, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) will, as required by law, exit from the A-2 project area—one of two Western Addition project areas labeled A-1 and A-2. Project A-1 closed in March 1973. Community members learned more about the details of the closure of the A-2 project area in a workshop presented to the SFRA commission in July.

Fred Blackwell, SFRA Executive Director, and staff members presented transition plans that included a historical presentation. A stirring film short provided insight on the painful memories that are resurfacing as the transition nears. Blackwell conceded that the impact and the experience was not a happy story for all. For example, there were 4,729 relocation certificates of preference issued to residents of the WA A-2 area. Of those certificates 1,099 were exercised, 488 were cancelled, 2,942 have no forwarding address, and 254 remain active.

In recognition of the displacement and the failure of the return of residents, Blackwell presented the commission with improvements that have been made to extend the term of the program, expand program eligibility, establish a down payment assistance pool and improve overall program administration.

Fred Blackwell, SFRA Executive Director, and staff members presented transition plans that included a historical presentation: Conditions of blight were significantly addressed by the development of the four block Nihonmachi area, the creation of the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District, streetscape improvements-public art and the creation of a Community Benefits District. Other SFRA accomplishments included the funding of community based organizations for workforce training and technical assistance provided to the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District businesses.

The SFRA WA-A2 project completed 8,400 new housing units of which 3,320 were affordable. The SFRA provided a direct economic investment of $51 million from 1977 to 2008, and an indirect investment of over $1.1 Billion.

A brief tour of the area reveals a new landscape. The completed project includes the highly visible Fillmore Center (a sprawling rental complex with retail space), a significant number of community centers and churches that were rebuilt, over 8000 housing units and the recent completion of the Fillmore Heritage Center (an 80 unit condominium complex a
jazz club, restaurant and museum) that is the finishing structural component of the Fillmore Jazz District. Much of the work to breathe life into the district is