INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency Commissioners

FROM: Fred Blackwell, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Media Clippings from 04.27.11 to 05.10.11

Enclosed is a collection of supportive and positive newspaper/media clippings that refer to the Redevelopment Agency or an Agency-related project or program.

(Originated by Gia Casteel-Brown, Executive Assistant)

[Signature]

Fred Blackwell
Executive Director

SOMA / YERBA BUENA / MISSION BAY:


Attachment 3: SFGate.com: "High-speed rail panel rejects Caltrain route plan," May 6, 2011


Attachment 5: Office of the Mayor: "Mayor Lee breaks ground on new Metron and City’s first Target Store," May 5, 2011


Attachment 7: SFGate.com: "Target to transform appearance of S.F.’s Metron," May 6, 2011

Attachment 8: SFGate.com: "Metrone get a makeover but can’t escape its box," May 7, 2011


BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT SHIPYARD:


Attachment 13: SFGate.com: “Executive Park residential development OK’d in S.F.,” May 6, 2011

Attachment 14: The Examiner/sfexaminer.com: “Meditation program mends troubled Visitacion Valley Middle School,” May 10, 2011

REDEVELOPMENT:

Attachment 15: BeyondChron: “Twenty Years on San Francisco’s Sixth Street,” April, 27, 2011

Attachment 16: Office of the Mayor: “Mayor Lee Announces First Series of Workshops to Transform Market Street,” May 2, 2011

Attachment 17: SFGate.com: “Octavia Court apartments a milestone for area,” May 3, 2011

Attachment 18: Office of the Mayor: “Mayor Lee Announces HUD Funding for Veterans Commons,” May 10, 2011
The heart of San Francisco, District 6 outgrowing its surroundings

Comments (0)

Dueling constituencies: The City’s District 6 has come to encompass both the disenfranchised Tenderloin and the more affluent South of Market and South Beach, leading to concerns in serving the populace. (Mike Koozmin/The Examiner)

When the Moscone Center opened in 1981, Gwenn Craig attended an evening event in the South of Market conference hall, which had been built in what was then a quiet, industrial neighborhood, mostly deserted at night and on weekends.

“So much of the neighborhood was empty,” Craig said. “Everything around it was vacant. You felt like you were going to some sort of distant outpost. People felt a little nervous because it was so deserted.”

Some 14 years after that evening dinner, Craig and eight fellow members of The City’s Elections Task Force drew an invisible line around the neighborhood and called it District 6. Advocates had successfully argued that the downtrodden heart of The City — South of Market, the Tenderloin, the North Mission and the Sixth Street corridor — should be joined into a single district rather than being fractured and underrepresented in other districts. Treasure Island was eventually included the district as well.

By 2010, District 6 still represented those disenfranchised communities, but it also had become perhaps the most transformed part of San Francisco, home to some 94,788 residents, including many of The City’s richest and poorest.

Today, SoMa bears only passing resemblance to the residentially barren landscape the Moscone Center first graced. A Giants outfielder with a good arm could throw a baseball from there and hit several of San Francisco’s hottest restaurants, an upscale grocery store or the current offices of microblogging website Twitter. The once-distant outpost also is surrounded by high-rise apartments and condos, plus museums and hotels.

Some 24,000 new residents have moved into District 6 in just the past decade. The growth makes it the largest supervisorial district by some 15,000 residents, according to a recently released Planning Department analysis of census data. It’s 44 percent larger than the smallest district in The City, the Mission’s District 9. The next redistricting committee will have to take 21,000 residents out of District 6 to make its population equal to that of others.
Some of those residents live in new low-income housing in the Tenderloin and the western edge of SoMa. But most are in the district's old industrial eastern edge, where lofts and luxury condominiums such as the Millennium Tower and One Rincon Hill have replaced warehouses and surround a gleaming waterfront ballpark.

Craig now works near AT&T Park. She said the neighborhood is already much different from the district she and other Elections Task Force members created in 1995.

"Over the last 10 years, it's been the most dramatic transformation as The City continues to move southward," Craig said. "We're building a whole new city."

She said District 6 was "probably our most contentious district" during the 2002 redistricting, which she chaired. Among the contentions then was one from some newcomers who complained that they shouldn't be grouped in with the poorer central neighborhoods.

"We did have some people who came from what they referred to as South Beach who said, 'Don't forget about us. We're different, we have different issues,'" Craig said. "They made up a smaller constituency then than I suspect they do now."

**New boundaries will tug on surrounding districts**

Priority No. 1 for San Francisco's next redistricting task force is to find a way to shave off about 22,000 people from District 6 and redistribute them to other districts.

Exactly how that will be done will change the political alignment of districts across The City, because as one line is redrawn on one end of a district, it will force another line on the other end of the district to also be redrawn.

Current District 6 Supervisor Jane Kim said she entrusts the redistricting process to decide what parts are appropriate to move. But her predecessor, Chris Daly, was not as short on opinion. Daly said it's crucial to keep the central city together.

"What you want to do is keep the main character and integrity of the district," he said. "Which means if you're shrinking, you're probably shrinking around the edges."

Daly said the most obvious place to chop the district is on its eastern edge, where most of the growth has happened.

"It's the waterfront precincts, those are the ones that have grown the most, and I think those are the most logical to turn out of the district," he said. "Those precincts have much more in common with District 3."

Jim Meko, a community organizer and unsuccessful candidate for District 6 supervisor last year, said some people on that end of the district might be thrilled to be cut loose. He said in the last round of redistricting, people living in South Beach were eager to escape what they thought was a district that did not represent their values.

"They even came up with a scheme to gerrymander South Beach along The Embarcadero so they could be with North Beach," Meko said. "They've matured since then."
Elections Chief John Arntz declined to comment on how the district will be chopped, but he said it looks "inevitable" that some rearrangement will have to take place. He said the state's redistricting process is scheduled to conclude by mid-August, and San Francisco will likely convene its Elections Task Force to consider redistricting after that.

Source URL: http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/2011/04/heart-city-district-6-outgrowing-its-surroundings
From the San Francisco Business Times:
http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/print-edition/2011/05/06/more-hot-deals-ahead-for-simmering.html

Real Estate

More hot deals ahead for simmering SoMa market

Premium content from San Francisco Business Times - by J.K. Dineen and Blanca Torres

Date: Friday, May 6, 2011, 3:00am PDT

Related:

Commercial Real Estate, Residential Real Estate

How hot is the SoMa investment market getting? We're about to find out.

With Tishman Speyer having closed on the purchase of 350 Rhode Island St. for $325 a square foot, San Francisco market observers are expecting to see a full roster of South of Market buildings hitting the block in the next few weeks.

Some of the action has already begun.

Westcore Properties is in full marketing mode on 795 Folsom St., famously the headquarters of Twitter. As even the guy who shines your shoes now probably knows, Twitter has signed a deal to move into 200,000 square feet at Market Square, the 1-million-square-foot, two-building complex at 1355 Market St. that Shorenstein Properties recently bought. Space at 795 Folsom is currently 100 percent occupied. Twitter will vacate two floors when it leaves in 2012, but the building should draw plenty of interest from core buyers. It has received national media attention for all the social media companies that have flocked to it to be close to Twitter. Other tenants in the building include tech companies like Klout, Storify and Liquid Traffic, as well as Regus Business Centers, SBC Global and Rovi.

Grant Lammerson, George Eckard, Seth Siegel and Bob Kraynak of Cushman & Wakefield have the listing. Siegel declined comment.

A few blocks away, 642 Harrison St., a 50,000-square-foot building managed by Ellis Partners, has hit the market. The building, which is owned by a group of private investors, is home to Limelight Networks, MSA Planning & Design Consultants, and Cammisa and Wipf Consulting Engineers. Daniel Cressman of Grubb & Ellis has the listing.
“There is one floor available, which is good news in this market because rents are going up by the week,” said Cressman.

Finally, there is some talk that 625 Second St. is being quietly shopped off-market. The building could be a prime candidate for Kilroy Realty Corp., which still has a voracious appetite for San Francisco office buildings after buying 100 First St., 303 Second St. and 250 Brannan St.

**Life sciences, cleantech shine in flat market**

Office leasing in the inner East Bay remained flat during the first quarter of 2011 with an overall vacancy of 20.7 percent, according to a report from Cornish & Carey Newmark Knight Frank. The report tracks office space from Oakland up to Richmond.

Class A space in Oakland had a vacancy of 16.4 percent, while similar space in Emeryville had 22 percent vacancy.

The major deals of the quarter included Webcor Builders taking 38,000 square feet at 1751 Harbor Bay Parkway in Alameda from landlord BPG Properties and Merrill Lynch renewing 23,211 square feet at 1111 Broadway in Oakland City Center with landlord CBRE Investors.

Even with some deals happening, the inner East Bay had negative absorption of 118,000 square feet, including the loss of Onyx Pharmaceuticals to South San Francisco. The drugmaker vacated approximately 65,000 square feet at 2100 Powell in Emeryville.

“A very bright spot in the East Bay markets is the expansion in the life sciences and cleantech sectors,” the report states. “There is virtually no lab space available in Emeryville and Berkeley and both venture capital and government-backed funding is fueling the expansion in this sector.”

**Buyers grab Oakland, San Leandro buildings**

Investors continue snapping up apartment buildings in the East Bay.

In Oakland, Perkins Street Partners LLC picked up a 35-unit apartment for $4.675 million at 314 Perkins St., less than a block away from Lake Merritt. The price breaks down to $133,571 per unit or $142 per square foot.

The building is in the Adams Point neighborhood, a highly desired area for apartment investors and tenants, and offered high-quality construction, according to brokers Joel Kelly and Kris Lamont of Bay Apartment Advisors, who represented the buyer. Kevin Turner of Marcus & Millichap represented the seller 314 Perkins LLC.

Elsewhere, Cabot Bay, a 93-unit apartment complex in San Leandro, recently changed hands for $9.9 million. Fowler Property Acquisitions of San Francisco bought the apartments at 13495 Bancroft Ave. and 13730 East 14th St. for $106,452 per unit and $154 per square foot.
The property was built in 1965 and underwent an extensive renovation in 2008. The seller in the deal was Bancroft SPE LLC, a Dallas-based investor.

Contact him at jkdineen@bizjournals.com or (415) 288-4971.
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High-speed rail panel rejects Caltrain route plan
Michael Cabanatuan, Chronicle Staff Writer
Friday, May 6, 2011

(05-06) 04:00 PDT Sacramento --

The California High-Speed Rail Authority has put the brakes on a plan that could stop high-speed trains short of San Francisco's new Transbay Terminal.

The authority board told engineers and planners Thursday not to study a phased-implementation plan, which would electrify the Caltrain tracks and use them as a quicker, lower-cost way to bring high-speed rail up the Peninsula to the Caltrain station at Fourth and King streets in San Francisco.

"It's not that we don't want to go" to the Transbay Terminal, said Roelof van Ark, the authority's chief executive officer. "It's a question of how many billions will we have? We have to get to Fourth and King before we can go to the Transbay Terminal."

The phased plan would not only stop short of the Transbay Terminal, it would also lengthen the time it takes to get from San Jose to San Francisco. Instead of running at speeds up to 125 mph on the Peninsula, high-speed trains would travel at Caltrain speeds, which top out at 80 mph.

The first stretch of the $43 billion San Francisco-to-Los Angeles high-speed rail system will be built in the San Joaquin Valley. There is no funding for the Peninsula stretch and the authority is struggling to contain costs and to calm opposition from critics along the Caltrain corridor who want the new trains to either travel underground or be rerouted.

The phased plan would be a stopgap, said Tim Cobb, a project manager. The authority would continue to plan a system with separate rails for high-speed trains and Caltrain, as well as for extending the system the final 1.3 miles from Fourth and King streets to the Transbay Transit Center under construction at First and Mission streets.

The phased plan, which could cost $2 billion to $4 billion versus the $6.1 billion projected for the true high-speed system between San Francisco and San Jose, shares similarities with a recent proposal released by state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, and Assemblyman Rich Gordon, D-Menlo Park. That proposal would use the Caltrain tracks, but also ban construction of elevated tracks and not allow future construction of separate tracks for the high-speed trains.

Both of the cheaper plans would end high-speed service at Fourth and King streets.
Jim Hartnett, a former Redwood City mayor just appointed to the authority, questioned whether buying land around the Caltrain station and enlarging the depot to accommodate high-speed rail would cost much less than going to the Transbay Terminal. Leroy Saage, a deputy director of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, agreed, saying the land alone could cost $400 million.

"San Francisco service that stops short of the Transbay Transit Center would require construction of an unnecessary and inadequate station at Fourth and King," he said.

Ending the tracks at Fourth and King streets also could violate state law. Voter-approved Proposition 1A, which permitted the sale of $10 billion in bonds for high-speed rail, requires the first phase of the 800-mile statewide system to connect the Transbay Terminal and Union Station in Los Angeles. Board member Lynn Schenk asked whether the authority can legally ignore that requirement. The state attorney general's office will investigate the issue.

Schenk, a former congresswoman from San Diego, called the Simitian-Eshoo-Gordon proposal to confine construction to the existing tracks "a bailout of Caltrain. I don't want to see our precious high-speed rail funds, which were so hard to come by, to be used to bail out any existing commuter railroads."

E-mail Michael Cabanatuan at mcabanatuan@sfchronicle.com.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/06/BA8S1JCGBA.DTL

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Metreon 2.0 and S.F.'s first Target, break ground Thursday

San Francisco Business Times - by Sarah Duxbury

Date: Wednesday, May 4, 2011, 2:27pm PDT

- Sarah Duxbury
- Reporter
- Email: sduxbury@bizjournals.com

Westfield will officially break ground on its Metreon 2.0 project and the city's first Target store on Thursday May 5.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee will join Fred Blackwell of the Redevelopment Agency and other city and Westfield officials to take a sledgehammer to the doomed columns on Metreon's fourth floor.

At the press conference, they will disclose specifics about the remodel, including the final design, the new tenants joining the projects (the Business Times reported on many of those in June 2009, before Tavern on the Green filed for bankruptcy and withdrew from the project), new jobs being created by the construction and the new retailers, renovation plans for the AMC Theatres, the Target and a timeline for the $30 million project.

The project was put on hold for a year or so due to the recession, but it is back on track and fully approved. Westfield's work should be complete by the end of the year and tenants will start their own interior construction in time to open in Spring of 2012.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, May 5, 2011
Contact: Mayor’s Office of Communications, 415-554-6131
San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, Amy Neches, 415-749-2450
Westfield, Peter Bartelme, 415-664-1503, pb@prstrategies.com

*** PRESS RELEASE ***

MAYOR LEE BREAKS GROUND ON NEW METREON AND CITY’S FIRST TARGET STORE
Metreon Project to Create 1,300 Jobs, Generate $4.4 Million Annually in Local Tax Revenue and Bring 20 New Businesses to SF

San Francisco, CA— Today Mayor Edwin M. Lee, Westfield Group and Target marked the start of major improvements to revitalize Metreon in downtown San Francisco. The project includes a new 85,000 square foot CityTarget store, a new “Dining Terrace” overlooking Yerba Buena Gardens, dozens of new retailers and eateries, and major improvements to the AMC Theatres and Westfield’s City View event space. The project is expected to create 600 construction and 700 permanent jobs, both with resident local hire goals of 50 percent. The Metreon project is projected to generate $15 million in tax revenue a year through sales and real estate taxes, with more than $4.4 million a year going to the City.

“This is the perfect example of smart redevelopment that works,” said Mayor Lee. “At a time when growing our economy is a top priority, the Metreon project will create hundreds of new jobs, generate millions in tax revenues, and will be the home of the City’s first Target Store. I am proud to kickoff the start of this significant project.”

Metreon is in the Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment Project Area, which was formed in 1966. The Redevelopment Project Area is now the City’s cultural, convention and shopping district, with signature features like the six-acre Yerba Buena Gardens, Moscone Convention Center, and world-class museums and hotels. More than 2,500 new residences have been built in the Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment Project Area, including approximately 1,400 affordable units for seniors.

“Working with our private and non-profit partners, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency transformed this area into a thriving destination, a burgeoning neighborhood and an economic engine for San Francisco,” said San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Fred Blackwell. “Metreon is an important anchor to the neighborhood’s long-term success.”

Metreon opened in 1999. In 2006, it was purchased by Westfield and Forest City and in 2010 Westfield acquired ownership from Forest City, and is investing $30 million in its revitalization.

“Westfield has always believed that the property could be re-imagined to be better integrated into the neighborhood. The enhancements will celebrate beautiful Yerba Buena Gardens, improve the visitor experience, and complement nearby cultural and entertainment activities. We believe in San Francisco, in this location and we are thrilled to get started,” said Westfield Regional Senior Vice President Antony Ritch.
“Westfield is literally ‘throwing open the doors’ to beautiful Yerba Buena Gardens by integrating a new signature Dining Terrace and turning the tenants on the first floor toward the street, like most San Francisco buildings do to invite guests into the building. Dynamic new lighting, especially in the evening, will make Metreon a beacon to pedestrians.”

The new Metreon is nearly 100% leased, with more tenants to be announced in the months ahead.

The first floor will include local and regional food operators. The 470 seat Dining Terrace will feature three stories of glass facing Yerba Buena Gardens. Additional seats will be added along the park facing the exterior of Metreon. An active retail and dining promenade will be created along Mission Street and 4th Street. Street level and Dining Terrace tenants include: La Boulange Bakery; Best of Burger; Massage Envy; So Green Yogurt; Chipotle; San Francisco Soup; Mixt Green’s; Brandy Ho’s; Sorabol Korean BBQ; Firewood grill; Jillian’s (existing); Buckhorn Grill (existing); Sanraku (existing tenant). Additional retailers include: National University/San Francisco Campus; and, Chronicle Books (existing).

The second floor will be home to a new 85,000 square foot CityTarget store, which is a smaller version of a traditional Target store designed for urban markets. The store will feature a two-story glass entrance on Mission Street, which will take visitors directly into the new CityTarget and will offer a selection of merchandise tailored for city-dwellers, including fresh grocery offerings. San Francisco is one of a select group of major metropolitan areas with this new format store.

The third floor will be home to a re-modeled AMC Theatres and IMAX, with a new entrance and box office located at a new mid-Fourth Street entrance. AMC Theatres will remain open for business throughout the construction and revitalization of Metreon.

The fourth floor features the City View event space that is part of the renovation. City View is able to accommodate 2,000 guests in 30,000 square feet of special event space.

AMC Theatres, Jillian’s and Sanraku will remain open during construction. City View will open in September 2011. The first floor and Dining Terrace are scheduled to open early in 2012 and Target will open in late-2012.

About Westfield Group
The Westfield Group owns the building on land leased by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Westfield is the largest retail landlord in the State of California, and also has a national and global presence, with 119 shopping centers in the United States, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Australia valued in excess of $58.2 billion, with approximately 23,900 retailers in 113 million square feet of retail space.

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Westfield, Target unveil Metreon plans

San Francisco Business Times - by Sarah Duxbury

Date: Thursday, May 5, 2011, 2:37pm PDT

Sarah Duxbury
Reporter
Email: sduxbury@bizjournals.com

Today, Westfield Corp. and Target openly discussed their plans for a revamped Metreon for the first time.

Representatives of the city, Westfield and Target held a ceremonial groundbreaking and press conference today at which all parties hit on two favorite themes of San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee: job creation and the critical importance and effectiveness of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency.

"I want to stress that we do redevelopment right here," Lee said. The mayor also said that Metreon would provide invaluable services to all the tech workers he sees filling the Mid-Market corridor.

In the near term, Westfield will spend $30 million to renovate and reposition the 12-year-old Metreon, which will cost $30 million and create 600 temporary construction jobs. Once Target and the ground floor dining level are open, Metreon 2.0 will also have created over 700 permanent jobs. At least half of all the Metreon jobs created will be local hires, Lee said.

The new Metreon is projected to generate $15 million in tax revenues annually through sales and real estate taxes, with more than $4.4 million of that going to the City of San Francisco.

The first phase of that renovation will be to turn the fourth floor of the Metreon into a top-tier public event space it calls City View. That will be complete by the fall.

Another key piece of the repositioning of Metreon is essentially turning the ground floor inside out so it is no longer inward-facing. Instead, the floor will be divided into separate restaurant and retail spaces, as well as a 470-seat indoor and outdoor dining terrace, and
most will open directly onto Fourth Street or Mission Street, activating street life there. Metreon will also be more open on its Yerba Buena Garden face.

Over 20 restaurants, including La Boulange, Mixt Greens, San Francisco Soup Co. and Best of Burger have already signed leases to open in Metreon, which is almost completely leased, said Antony Ritch, regional senior vice president for Westfield. The ground floor businesses will open during the first quarter of 2012.

One of the country's first urban Target prototype stores will occupy the full 85,000 square foot second floor. It will feature Target's expanded fresh food offerings, and will have many of the goods people shop for at Target, as well as merchandise specifically tailored to San Francisco shoppers. The Target will employ over 200 people, and hiring will start six to eight months prior to opening in the second half of 2012.

On the third floor, Lowe's will rebrand the successful Metreon movie theater as an AMC Theaters. It will renovate the cinema and move the box office upstairs.

Jillians, Sanraku and the movie theater will all remain open during construction. Other existing tenants that will close during the remodel but will remain part of Metreon are Chronicle Books and Buckhorn Grill. The project will also welcome National University/San Francisco Campus.

The Metreon stands on land owned by the Redevelopment Agency, which designated the Yerba Buena area a redevelopment project in 1966. SFMOMA, the Contemporary Jewish Museum, Moscone Convention Center, the gardens and theaters were all built under the Redevelopment Agency's direction.
Target to transform appearance of S.F.'s Metreon
Andrew S. Ross
Friday, May 6, 2011

It wasn't actually a groundbreaking, and besides, construction work has already begun on the "reimagining" of the San Francisco Metreon, as Westfield Group Senior Vice President Antony Ritch put it.

But two swings of a sledgehammer by Ritch and Mayor Ed Lee against a pillar on the Metreon's fourth floor Thursday marked the ceremonial unveiling of a $30 million project, which, when complete in the fall of 2012, will transform the look of the troubled downtown mall on Fourth Street.

Coming in as anchor tenant is San Francisco's first Target store, an urban-oriented City Target, which will take up the entire second floor, offering fresh dairy, produce and meats, as well as baby diapers and so forth.

"The Metreon perfectly represents the City Target concept," said Donna Egan, a Target representative who sported a hard hat for photographers but didn't get to wield a sledgehammer.

The AMC theaters are getting a makeover, as is the fourth-floor events space that hosts business meetings, private parties and convention galas.

Then there's the dining terrace opening onto Yerba Buena Gardens, scheduled to open next winter, plus new street-level storefronts, restaurants and cafes. "We're looking to create a more promenade, 'street' feel, to better integrate it with the neighborhood," Ritch said in an interview.

Among the new eateries are La Boulange Bakery, Chipotle, Firewood Café and Brandy Ho's. Ritch said the entire complex is almost 100 percent leased.

That reflects, in part, a "nice pickup in the economy" in San Francisco, said Ritch, including business at the Westfield San Francisco Centre up the street.

"We're continuing to invest in San Francisco, in one of the world's great cities."

The payoff: So, what's in it for one of the world's great cities?
According to the Westfield Group and city agencies, the project is expected to create 600 construction and 700 permanent jobs. "It fulfills my constant theme - job creation," Lee said. At least 50 percent city hires is the objective.

The new, improved Metreon is expected to generate $15 million in tax revenue annually, with more than $4.4 million a year going to city coffers. According to a San Francisco Redevelopment Agency memo, Target is projecting $120,000 in annual payroll taxes, a minimum of $5.4 million in annual sales taxes, and about $1 million in additional parking revenue for the Fifth and Mission Street Garage.

Lee made a special note to single out the Redevelopment Agency, which owns the Yerba Buena and Metreon land and steered the project through the bureaucracy.

"I say to Gov. Brown, 'We do development right here,' " he said, pointedly referring to Brown's proposal to eliminate redevelopment agencies statewide.

Afterward, I asked Lee if his lobbying against Brown's proposal has had any effect. "He hasn't budged yet," said Lee, adding that a Plan B for alternative financing for San Francisco's agency is being discussed.

Fred Blackwell, the redevelopment agency's executive director, said the project has finally given him credibility with his grandmother.

"I try to explain what I do. I talk about affordable housing, infrastructure and economic development, but she never really got it until I told her I was involved in bringing a Target to San Francisco."

Not going to waste: An Alameda County public agency that encourages local businesses to "use reusables" is going national.

The agency, StopWaste.org, just received a $499,000 EPA grant to expand its campaign aimed at getting businesses to replace traditional transport packaging - such as pallets, boxes and stretch wrap - with more durable, reusable and cost-saving alternatives.

For example, according to the organization, Oakland's Peerless Coffee & Tea is saving $100,000 a year with reusable transport packaging and other efficiency measures the company has implemented with StopWaste.org's help.

The new money, which builds on a $35,000 EPA grant in 2009 to organize "use reusables" workshops across the Bay Area, is one of 22 awards across the country, part of the EPA's Climate Showcase Communities Program (sfg.ly/1DzZj9).

StopWaste.org is working with the Reusable Packaging Association (www.reusables.org), a national trade organization, to expand its campaign.
**Brownie points:** The Alameda County Community Food Bank gave out this year's annual Red Plate Awards on Tuesday to local businesses who have donated the most to its food drives.

The award in the small business category went to Oakland's Harborside Health Center, which this year donated more than 5,300 pounds of food to the food bank.

The center is a medical marijuana dispensary, judged by the East Bay Express as the East Bay's "outstanding cannabis club."

The corporation/large business award went to biotech company Amgen, which "develops, manufactures and delivers innovative human therapeutics."

Blogging: www.sfgate.com/columns/bottomline. Facebook page: sfg.ly/doACKM. Tweeting: @andrewsross. E-mail: bottomline@sfchronicle.com.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/06/BUMS1JC324.DTL

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

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Metreon gets a makeover but can't escape its box
John King, Chronicle Urban Design Critic
Saturday, May 7, 2011

There's a rich cultural yarn in the saga of San Francisco's Metreon, about how a gimmicky and failed world unto itself will be reborn as a place designed to draw strength from the city around it.

Goodbye, virtual bowling alley. Hello, Target!

But there's also an architectural lesson in the block-long complex with its front door at Fourth and Mission streets: Once a developer makes a huge mistake, it's hard to set things right.

The four-story, 360,000-square-foot space now being retooled for a 2012 reopening will be a vast improvement over the "ultimate entertainment experience" that Sony unveiled with fanfare in 1999. At least 12 stores and restaurants will open directly to the sidewalk. The interior layout will finally take full advantage of the 64-foot-high glass wall that faces lively Yerba Buena Gardens.

What won't change, alas, is the blank boxiness of the silvery metal-skinned structure - and both Target and the city are passing up chances to make the block more dynamic.

The reborn Metreon will replace the original cluster of inward-looking spaces with four attractions stacked atop each other, connected by the walls they share and little else. On the ground there will be retail space along Fourth and Mission streets and a food court - sorry, "dining terrace" - with seating that spills toward the gardens beyond.

Target gets the second floor, entered by escalators and elevators from a two-story foyer along Mission Street. The third level remains in its current use as a multiplex theater. The summit will be left largely empty, available for special events such as receptions tied to the surrounding Moscone Convention Center.

Oh, and say goodbye to the current entrance with its theatrically lit marquee. Target will use the corner as a glassed-in cafeteria, placing its foyer to the east.

One realm to the next

The neighborhood connections are the best thing about Metreon 2.0: Developer Westfield Group understands that urban drama comes in the passage from one realm to the next. Conventioneers walking up Fourth Street will have a row of offerings to distract them. The escalators that serve the
third and fourth levels are being moved as close to the glass wall as possible, making the journey into a procession of panoramas.

"What we really want to do is integrate this property into its surroundings," Antony Ritch, Westfield's senior vice president for the region, said of the design being done in-house.

Sony should have taken this approach from the start - but since it didn't, there's only so much to be done with a box this restrictive. The ground floor will be split into small spaces oriented to the street, but it's too low and monotonous to be truly beguiling. Above, Westfield can't cut windows into walls that shield movie theaters.

Still, the box could be made more inviting than current plans allow. And Target is partly to blame.

No big-box chain understands design like this Minneapolis-based retailer, which has fashioned a hip aura despite a store count that now exceeds 1,750. But it also knows what it wants once shoppers enter: large spaces easy to navigate, no distractions allowed.

To make this happen at Metreon, Target is being allowed to fill in a second-floor recessed bay above what is being billed as the "grand new midblock Fourth Street main entrance" to the food court and multiplex. The idea is to emphasize an already existing passage that faces Minna Street, but the addition will make it even more tunnel-like.

On the second floor, large glass panels that could be windows instead will contain static red-and-white graphics. Ritch described the aim as "a layered texture ... lighting mixed with colored material for depth." A sure-fire way to create depth? Open the windows to the street so that passers-by could see the activity above.

A block for experimentation

Better yet, imagine if planners at the city's Redevelopment Authority pushed - allowed? - Westfield to think outside the box. Literally, with streaming imagery tied to current movies, perhaps, or Target graphics that pulsated rather than simply evoked the brand. If there's a block where San Francisco could experiment with a Times Square feel, this is it, across from the Moscone and the city's largest parking garage.

Make no mistake, the changes under way will enrich the entire district as well as Westfield's bottom line. But in the months before Metreon's conversion is complete, here's a rule of thumb to follow as final design decisions are made: Push for more excitement, not less.

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http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/07/MNI11JD0F2.DTL

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http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/07/MNI11JD0F2.DTL&type=print... 5/9/2011
San Francisco kicks off effort to attract life sciences

Premium content from San Francisco Business Times - by Ron Leuty

Date: Friday, April 29, 2011, 3:00am PDT

Related:

Health Care

Federal money, a state program and local partnerships — plus a newly hired leader — are coming together in an effort to swell the ranks San Francisco’s life sciences community and attract more jobs.

BioSF, modeled on the city’s China-focused economic development initiative, ChinaSF, looks to capitalize on the success of the city’s Mission Bay biotech enclave, said Douglas Crawford, associate director of the California Institute for Quantitative Biosciences, or QB3, at the University of California, San Francisco.

The mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development, QB3 and the nonprofit San Francisco Center for Economic Development — three groups that have worked together on projects like the Mission Bay incubator network — are partners in BioSF.

The effort is backed by $200,000 from the state’s Innovation Hub program — federal Small Business Administration money funneled through the Small Business Development Center at Humboldt State University — and a $35,000 grant from the city. But Todd Rufo, of the mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development, said BioSF eventually will be self-supporting.

Sally Ann Reiss, whose experience ranges from the founding team of digital video recorder company TiVo, advising venture capital firm Proteus Venture Partners and chief operating officer of Mission Bay biotech startup Omniox Inc., started April 25 as BioSF’s program manager.

“It’s a perfect time for biotech to really grow,” said Reiss, a UCSF employee who also will have space at City Hall. “People are starting to take risks again.”

Reiss’ mission is to attract life sciences companies to San Francisco, especially to Mission Bay and Pier 70, build an ecosystem of companies around those already here and create a
playbook of resources — real estate, accounting, human resources and legal, for example — that can help startups lower their costs.

"It's about how to lower the overall cost of a startup and increase the likelihood of success," Crawford said.

There already is a track record with the incubator network, including space at UC Berkeley, parenting 49 companies over five years. But the stakes are raised as the Port of San Francisco and developer Forest City look to entitle nearby Pier 70 for about 2.5 million square feet and Mission Bay starts to fill with startups and bellwethers like Bayer HealthCare, Nektar Therapeutics Inc., FibroGen Inc. and Celgene Corp.

"This is all about the jobs," Dennis Conaghan, executive director of the San Francisco Center for Economic Development said about BioSF. "It's really a jobs program."

San Francisco now is home to 74 life sciences companies, including biotech drug developers, medical device and diagnostics companies.

BioSF is part of a broader economic development strategy by the city, including ChinaSF and the nonprofit SFMade that is focused on boosting manufacturing in the Northeast Mission, Central Waterfront and South of Market areas.

"This is not just a city program. We're using partnerships to develop lasting infrastructure," Rufo said. "This is a really novel way to do economic development."

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Commercial real estate

Alexandria jumps back into San Francisco's Mission Bay

San Francisco Business Times

Date: Friday, April 29, 2011, 7:07am PDT

Six months after selling most of its land in Mission Bay to Salesforce.com Inc., Alexandria Real Estate Equities wants to jump back into the neighborhood with the $290 million purchase of 409-499 Illinois St.

Alexandria is in contract to buy the 450,000-square-foot, two-building life science complex that Shorenstein Properties and SKS Investments completed in 2008.

The complex is anchored by FibroGen Inc., which leases 239,000 square feet. The transaction has gone non-refundable, but has not closed yet. Both Shorenstein and Alexandria declined to comment.

The price, $644 a square foot, would be the highest price per square foot paid for ...
From the San Francisco Business Times:

Alexandria out and in at Mission Bay

$290M buy eyed for Shorenstein/SKS life science complex

Premium content from San Francisco Business Times - by J.K. Dineen

Date: Friday, April 29, 2011, 3:00am PDT

Related:

Commercial Real Estate

Six months after selling most of its land in Mission Bay to Salesforce.com Inc., Alexandria Real Estate Equities wants to jump back into the neighborhood with the $290 million purchase of 409-499 Illinois St.

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The price, $644 a square foot, would be the highest price per square foot paid for a San Francisco commercial property since the bottom fell out of the commercial real estate market in 2008. In the last comparable deal in December of 2009, Tishman Speyer Office Fund sold the 283,000-square-foot building at 550 Terry Francois Blvd. for $135.5 million — $480 a square foot.

In November, Alexandria, a real estate investment trust based in Pasadena, sold 14 acres in Mission Bay to Salesforce for $278 million. The land is entitled for 2 million square feet of space and Alexandria had planned to build labs there.

The Salesforce transaction was a game-changer for Mission Bay: Most of the remaining land in Mission Bay zoned for commercial development will be taken up by the headquarters campus for Salesforce, which hopes to move at least 8,000 workers there, instead of by life science companies as originally envisioned.

In snapping up the Illinois Street property, Alexandria would solidify its control of what remains of San Francisco’s biotech real estate. The company has built four research and
development buildings in the neighborhood totaling about 775,000 square feet. Alexandria has another site entitled for a 290,000-square-foot building.

FibroGen signed its Illinois Street lease in August 2006 for rent that was north of $50 a square foot. FibroGen has not decided whether to exercise an option to take the second building. It subleases about 20,000 square feet of its current space to 27 biotech and cleantech startups.

In an earnings call last fall, Alexandria Real Estate Equities said the decision to sell off most of its remaining land in Mission Bay to Salesforce was driven by a desire to pay down debt. Alexandria said the sale resulted in a net gain of $60 million, according to CFO Dean Shigenaga.

The move was also part of a larger shift away from risky speculative projects to "a kind of post-crash build-to-suit with high-quality tenants," Alexandria CEO Joel Marcus said during the call.

"I think this sale confirms that many people have really substantially undervalued our value-add land holdings," said Marcus.

The Illinois Street property is part of Shorenstein's Fund Seven, which was formed in 2003 with $775 million of committed capital, including $75 million from Shorenstein.

"Alexandria has a lot of expertise and depth of knowledge in that submarket, so they were probably the most qualified buyer," said Daniel Cressman, a broker with Grubb & Ellis. "In light of the sale to Salesforce, they're in a good position to acquire it."

J.K. Dineen covers real estate for the San Francisco Business Times. Contact him at jkdineen@bizjournals.com or (415) 288-4971. Read his blog postings at Bay Area BizTalk.
Hunters Point Shipyard construction set for July

Premium content from San Francisco Business Times - by J.K. Dineen

Date: Friday, April 29, 2011, 3:00am PDT

Related:

Residential Real Estate

After a number of false starts, Lennar says it finally plans to start construction this summer on 240 homes in the former Hunters Point Shipyard, according to Executive Vice President Kofi Bonner.

While a drop in the bucket compared with the 10,500 units Lennar is entitled to build in the defunct shipyard, the number of units is four times the 88 homes Lennar previously said they would start with.

“We have black-topped the roads and the street lights are going in this week,” said Bonner. “We are polishing off the construction documents and hope to be under way in July.”

The start of the first phase of the Hunters Point redevelopment has been delayed for two years by an anemic housing market and Lennar’s focus on an epic political battle that culminated with San Francisco Board of Supervisors approval last July of the broader plan for Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point. In addition to the housing, the 702-acre project includes 3.4 million square feet of commercial development and 340 acres of parks and open space.

While Lennar had hoped to start work after the vote, the development company had its hands full with lawsuits filed by the environmental group Sierra Club and activist groups Greenaction and POWER. The Sierra Club lawsuit has been settled; the POWER/Greenaction lawsuit is still pending.

Bonner said Lennar has been focused recently on deciding how many units to put in phase one and what other infrastructure needs to be complete with the first batch of homes. He said that construction of the new neighborhood’s first parks would start six or seven months after the ground-breaking on the first homes.
“We have struggled over the last seven months on the question of how do you begin a master-planned community to show that it is different than a single development,” said Bonner.

J.K. Dineen covers real estate for the San Francisco Business Times. Contact him at jkdineen@bizjournals.com or (415) 288-4971. Read his blog postings at Bay Area BizTalk.
Executive Park residential development OK'd in S.F.
Will Kane, Chronicle Staff Writer
Friday, May 6, 2011

Called the little sibling of the larger development at Hunters Point Shipyard, a plan to build 1,600 new residential units in a triangular area tucked between Candlestick Park and Highway 101 was approved unanimously by the Planning Commission Thursday.

Developers and the city have been mulling proposals for the desolate area known as the Executive Park since the late 1970s. But no plan gained traction until last summer, when the city approved a huge development at the nearby former naval shipyard.

The $2 billion investment in the shipyard project - which will bring 24,000 new residents to the area - will create the community and infrastructure that will enable the smaller Executive Park development to succeed, said Jonathan Scharfman of Universal Paragon Corp., one of the project's developers.

In fact, the city even slowed work on the Executive Park plan so it would be approved after the Hunters Point project, he said.

"This is a piece of a larger vision for a new residential gateway to the city of San Francisco," he said. "We don't feel like a stepchild; we feel like we're part of something larger."

Eventually, the roughly 70-acre site, which is now mostly parking lots and temporary office space, could have more than 2,800 residential units in a number of towers, some up to 240 feet tall. A patchwork of condominiums has already been built and will remain.

The project faced little opposition, because the area does not currently provide much value to the city, commissioners said.

"This is one of those rare places where because of the changing economy, we're realizing the suburban business park just doesn't work anymore," said Katharin Moore, a commissioner notoriously skeptical of developers' promises.

An important consideration for the development will be creating a sense of community in the desolate, blustery area, boxed in by Highway 101, Bayview Hill, Candlestick Park and the bay.

To that end, commissioners approved the project on the condition that the full Board of Supervisors, who will hear the project next, consider moving one of the 16-story towers east, away from the freeway.
Moore said she didn't want residents stuck with a view looking directly onto the freeway.

The neighborhood will have a center away from the busy traffic, Scharfman said.

"It will have a neighborhood town center so people's day-to-day needs for a neighborhood grocery can be met without getting into a car," he added.

The development will also be a roughly 10-minute walk from the nearby Caltrain station and a quick bus ride to the Balboa Park BART station.

"There's a strong, strong business right now in transporting workers who want to live in San Francisco to their jobs in Silicon Valley," Scharfman said.

Espanola Jackson, a resident of the Bayview neighborhood, said she was pleased to see the project move forward.

"It is important because of the fact that it's just an empty slot right now and they want to come in and make the area more beautiful," she said. "We're always last on the city's list to change things. Maybe that has changed."

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http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/06/BAME1JBUBR.DTL

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Meditation program mends troubled Visitacion Valley Middle School

Comments (0)

"It takes away the anger": Transcendental meditation programs are conducted twice daily in 12-minute sessions at Visitacion Valley Middle School. (Dan Schreiber/The Examiner)
Every day before class, Visitacion Valley Middle School students pass an informal memorial known as the "R.I.P. wall," a reminder of trouble that awaits them when the afternoon bell rings.

In 2004, two students discovered the partially decomposed body of a 19-year-old stabbing victim. Later that year, a gunman brazenly stormed into the school, threatened to kill a teacher and robbed two employees. In the 2009-10 school year, one-fifth of the students had one or both parents incarcerated.

"Everybody in this school was either related to somebody who has been shot, who did the shooting, or who saw a shooting," said Jim Dierke, the school principal. "We had kids who couldn’t learn."

In the spring of 2007, Dierke decided he would try a simple solution.

The quiet time program involves the ancient techniques of transcendental meditation, conducted twice daily in 12-minute sessions before and after class.

The first announcement comes over the school’s intercom around 8:45 a.m. — "Prepare for quiet time," — and the teachers ring a little bell to mark the beginning of the exercise. Most students close their eyes; others cover their faces with their hands and focus on the repetition of a mantra.

"It takes away the anger," said Charles Ollie, an eighth-grader at the school. "Your brain is like a lake holding in water, and when we meditate, the flood gates open and the water is released."

Dierke and the school staff credit the program with reducing violence, increasing attendance and test scores and dramatically decreasing suspensions.
Other good things are happening, too, teachers said. The volleyball team made the playoffs this year for the first time in a long time, and some of the eighth-graders are making it into The City's top high schools, such as Lowell.

Most of the annual $175,000 funding for the program is provided by the New York-based David Lynch Foundation, founded by the TV and movie director. The money is used to pay for dedicated staff to run the quiet time program.

Opponents call it "stealth religion" that violates church-state separation laws because of its association with Eastern religions, but advocates insist that the practice predates Hinduism by thousands of years.

"They come from broken homes, foster care and group home settings," said Brian Borsos, a special education teacher. "This is a practice that helps them go back and face what they need to face. It's a skill they take with them for the rest of their lives."

Program is director Lynch's brainchild

A handful of San Francisco's troubled public schools have turned to a transcendental meditation program known as quiet time to relieve high stress in students, made possible by grants from the New York-based David Lynch Foundation.

The TV and film director launched the foundation in 2005 with support from two surviving members of the Beatles and their former meditation instructor Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. But foundation leaders say the practice has nothing to do with religion and is not a church-state separation issue.

Save some minor grumbling and initial skepticism, the San Francisco version of school meditation has not experienced nearly the opposition faced in 2006, when the foundation withdrew funding after parents at Terra Linda High School in San Rafael denounced it as a cult.

Bob Roth, the foundation's vice president, said the programs in San Francisco have gotten better reception.

Ellie Rossiter, executive director of the nonprofit Parents for Public Schools of San Francisco, said she has heard no opposition to the program. Some of The City's school officials have even provided testimony on the Lynch Foundation's website.

"It's an anchor, it's a balance for them and I believe it opens them to learning," Everett Middle School Principal Richard Curci said in a YouTube video.

Soothing results

The meditation program at Visitacion Valley Middle School was instituted in the spring of 2007.

45: Percent reduction in multiday suspensions for quiet-time students in program's first year
85: Suspensions in 2005-06
10: Suspensions in 2009-10
2.5: Average GPA in fall 2006
2.9: Average GPA in fall 2010
40: Point gain in API score in testing in 2009-10

Source: Visitacion Valley Middle School
dschreiber@sfexaminer.com

Local Education Education san francisco transcendental meditation Visitacion Valley Middle School

Source URL: http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/2011/05/meditation-program-mends-troubled-visitacion-valley-middle-school
Twenty Years on San Francisco’s Sixth Street

by Randy Shaw, 2011-04-27

Twenty years ago, the Tenderloin Housing Clinic (THC) began construction of two artist live-work units at Sixth and Minna Streets, under the Sunnyside Hotel. The units were occupied to great public acclaim – the May 7, 1992 San Francisco Chronicle story was titled, “Artists Bring Hope to Seedy Neighborhood” – and were joined by a community space on Sixth to provide “eyes on the street” on that troubled block. THC’s lease for the spaces ends this week, with much of the promise felt in 1991 still unfulfilled. While Sixth Street has improved overall in the past two decades, the southeast corner of Minna has not. And while we did provide affordable housing for low-income artists – including the now nationally known Cynthia Rojas in 1994 – our project did not spawn similar efforts or transform Sixth Street into an arts mecca.

We had great hopes for Sixth Street after the Redevelopment Agency made it a Project Area following the 1989 earthquake. Agency staff loved our strategy of trying to turn the street into a home for low-income artists, and eagerly funded our idea to transform an unused ground-level space below the Sunnyside Hotel at 135 6th Street into two affordable live-work units.

Susan Montana, then the lead city planner for the area, told the Chronicle, “this on Sixth Street is very important because it is well-known that artists stabilize a neighborhood, just by their nature – they’re outwardly involved with the neighborhood.” The Agency also saw great value in our creating a community space on the corner, providing the type of activities that would deter longstanding drug dealing at the site.

Roadblocks to Success

Our project was approved during Bill Rumpf’s tenure as Agency housing chief, but he and other Agnos allies left after Frank Jordan defeated Agnos in the 1991 mayoral election. The Jordan Administration’s Redevelopment Agency lacked the creativity and ambitions of its predecessor, and lacked responsiveness to community concerns.

San Francisco’s economy began declining in 1986, and – like the national and state economy – was even worse by 1992 (a major reason Bill Clinton defeated George Bush that November). The economic hard times discouraged new businesses from opening on Sixth Street, and the street’s economy was at a standstill.

We tried everything to make our community space a success, but our “eyes on the street” could not discourage the same crowd of drug dealers from congregating in front of our office as they had before we opened. The entire stretch of Minna from 6th to the Auburn Hotel was a major problem when we opened, and remains so to this day.

Our community space was used as a tenants’ association meeting place, an evening film
venue (we showed politically conscious films like *Do the Right Thing* and *Salvador*), and at the request of District Attorney Terrence Hallinan, as a satellite DA’s office. Its final use was as DA Arts, which provided free space to many local artists.

**Contrast With Today**

We (and I use that term to describe the residents, merchants, and landlords who were all largely in agreement on what the community needed) had a terrible time with the Redevelopment Agency in the nearly fifteen years following the opening of our spaces. And what struck me when I recently attended an event at a police substation being built at 72 6th Street was how much of the Agency’s current actions were opposed by its predecessors.

When we saw ongoing drug dealing and crime killing local businesses and leaving residents feeling unsafe, we urged Redevelopment to fund anti-crime efforts. We specifically urged funding for an Adopt-a-Block program that succeeded in increasing public safety at Turk and Leavenworth Streets.

But the Agency said they were not in the anti-crime business. All they cared about was brick and mortar, which community folks knew could not be the sole solution.

Today, the Agency cares enough about crime to be supporting the creation of the police substation. Better late than never.

Similarly, we felt the Agency should subsidize businesses to locate on 6th Street, even if it meant giving months of free rent. Given the difficult environment, we saw such business attraction strategies as essential.

But until recent years, the Agency did not actively promote or adequately fund a strategy of business attraction. Again, better late than never.

**The Big Picture**

We always opposed Sixth Street becoming a ghetto for the poor, while the surrounding areas gentrified through condo and hotel construction. But that is largely what occurred. The Agency never built any middle-class housing on Sixth Street, which would have helped local businesses and made the area more attractive for families with kids.

So while Director Fred Blackwell has moved the Agency’s Sixth Street efforts in a much more positive direction, 6th Street is not a place people live who can afford to move elsewhere in the city. The street’s speedway-like traffic was not slowed, there is much business turnover, and public drug dealing is commonplace.

And keep in mind that Sixth Street’s major problems have always been between Market and Minna, and this remains true today. This is a very small geographic area to have accomplished so little after the Agency had spent $80 million by 2002 and surely over
$125 million by today.

But most important now is that there appears greater optimism around Sixth Street's future than at any time since we began building our live-work units with high hopes in May 1991. This positive feeling bodes well for the neighborhood's future.

*Randy Shaw is Editor of Beyond Chron and Director of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic.*
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, May 2, 2011
Contact: Mayor’s Office of Communications, 415-554-6131

*** PRESS RELEASE ***

MAYOR LEE ANNOUNCES FIRST SERIES OF WORKSHOPS TO TRANSFORM MARKET STREET
Better Market Street Project Launches Workshops and Webinars for Greater Public Input

San Francisco, CA—Mayor Edwin M. Lee today announced the first series of community outreach workshops for the Better Market Street Project, an effort that aims to reinvigorate the streetscape and transportation options along Market Street, from the Embarcadero to Octavia Boulevard, to provide residents and visitors an enhanced and improved overall experience.

"Market Street is our City’s most iconic street, a hub for commerce, culture and transportation that connects San Francisco’s businesses and neighborhoods," said Mayor Lee. "We want to ensure that Market Street continues to support San Francisco’s vibrant economy by showcasing what this incredible city has to offer, while moving more people along the corridor, efficiently and reliably. These workshops will allow the public the opportunity to envision the greatness of the street in order to create a space that will make it truly, San Francisco."

The visioning process will begin in May with a series of public meetings and webinars to provide the community with project information and gather feedback on how to improve and reinvigorate Market Street. Urban designers and bike, transit, and pedestrian experts will be on hand to contribute their insight and answer questions. With support from community partners, a first round of public meetings will be held Tuesday, May 17 at the Warfield, 982 Market Street, from 6:00-8:30 p.m.; and Tuesday, May 24 at Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market Street, from 6:00-8:30 p.m. To accommodate busy schedules, lunchtime webinars are scheduled for Thursday, May 19 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. and Wednesday, May 25 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. People can sign up for the webinars at www.bettermarketstreetsf.org.

"The Better Market Street Project will design a signature street that encourages more social, cultural, and economic activities, while enhancing the experience for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit riders, and other vehicles" said Department of Public Works Director Ed Reiskin. "Through these outreach forums, we will inform a plan for a safe and inviting street that will accommodate the many uses of this corridor for the near and the long-term and honor the critical role Market Street plays in San Francisco."

The visioning process intends to collect broad input from stakeholders and local communities. The process will also include coordinated input from the Community Advisory Committee comprised of various stakeholder representatives, a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of agency staff from numerous disciplines, and a Civic Design Advisory Committee comprised of leading urban design professionals from around the Bay Area. The resulting consensus will inform a number of strategic and significant public space improvements that may include: landscaping, lighting, transit enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, traffic circulation improvements, outdoor seating, repaving, and many other features.

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 200, San Francisco, California 94102-4641
(415) 554-6141
About the Better Market Street Project
For more than century, Market Street has been a central spine in San Francisco. The street was built in the late 1800’s with the vision of Market Street as a grand boulevard. Its diagonal design made it a unique and central city connector for residents and visitors. On an average weekday, more than a quarter of a million people travel along Market Street to and from their destinations Market Street was last significantly upgraded in the early 1970s when the current street configuration was built.

The Better Market Street Project complements existing citywide plans including the Better Streets Plan, the San Francisco Countywide Transportation Plan, the Muni Transit Effectiveness Project, and the San Francisco Bicycle Plan. The current Better Market Street visioning and planning process is funded through a Safe Routes to Transit grant, Caltrans Planning Grant, Prop K transportation sales tax grant, and the General Fund.

Better Market Street Project is led by the Department of Public Works, Planning Department, SF Municipal Transportation Agency, SF County Transportation Authority, and the SF Public Utilities Commission in coordination with the Mayor’s Office and other city departments. The Project will result in a more vibrant, beautiful and exciting street that provides enhanced mobility for bicyclists, pedestrians, and public transit riders.

For more information on the Better Market Street Project, including how to register for the webinars, visit www.bettermarketstreetsf.org.

###
Octavia Court apartments a milestone for area
John King
Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Here are two reasons to celebrate Octavia Court, the 16-unit apartment building that opened last month at Octavia Boulevard and Oak Street in San Francisco.

The first is the handsome snap of the building itself, an oasis for developmentally disabled adults that meets the high standard of architectural quality set by other affordable-housing projects in the Bay Area.

The other is that it signals the start of the final phase of Octavia Boulevard's transformation from a shadowy path beneath a freeway to the centerpiece of Hayes Valley, one of the city's most intriguing neighborhoods.

"It feels like things are turning a corner," says Douglas Burnham, an architect who has been working on projects along Octavia since 2005 and finally has one under construction, an unorthodox set of customized shipping crates to be used by vendors where the boulevard meets Hayes Street.

Six crates are now at his site. Two contain an ice cream shop called Smitten that just opened to long lines. Two contain space for Ritual Roasters, a coffee vendor that should open this month. The two others hide less-glamorous details, like waste bins.

By fall there should be two dozen crates in all, filled with everything from local art to the service counters of a beer garden. But Burnham calls this effort Proxy for a reason: He considers it "temporary inhabitation" of land that someday will contain housing.

That change is fine with Burnham, who designed mixed-use buildings for a pair of blocks along the boulevard that are just 16 feet wide. The plans were approved in 2008, but then the economy changed.

In other neighborhoods, the recession meant fenced-off lots. Octavia's story is different. There's a temporary farm on one large block, community gardens on two small ones and now Proxy. All with local blessings.

"More than any neighborhood I know, this one wants to make positive things happen," Burnham says.

No kidding.
The boulevard exists because neighborhood activists rallied in the 1990s to have the city tear down the elevated freeway that cut above the space for 40 years, destabilizing the blocks around it in the process.

The outcome of the struggle? The freeway came down and a neighborhood-healing boulevard took form, complete with shrubs and trees in abundance. From the start, though, plans also made room for housing along the way - at all price levels. If the vanished freeway made gentrification inevitable, housing for less-advantaged populations could be created as well.

That's why it's a nice twist that Octavia Court arrives first on the scene.

The five-story structure was designed by Ellipsis A+D and Ignition Architecture, and it isn't designed to turn heads. The look is modern, with right-angled bays and a flat roof topped by angled rows of solar panels.

What makes it shine is the care that went into the details. The bays are accented with wood-patterned resin panels that alternate among four shades of reddish-brown. The wall along the sidewalk is clad in blue ceramic tiles that mix textures and hues.

Even the metal screen that hides open-air corridors on the upper floors has panache; it has the sheen of a woven cloak, not an industrial grate.

"We were striving for a sense of patterning and quilting, and this was a beautiful canvas to work with," said Ignition's Veronica Hinkley Reck of the design team's approach after it was selected in 2008 by developer West Bay Housing and the San Francisco Redevelopment Authority.

Not every move comes off. To set off the staggered window pattern of the bays, for instance, the architects shifted to white resin panels. Given the amount of boulevard-bound traffic that backs up on Oak Street, we'll see how long they stay white.

What's important is that this is a building that not only does good but also looks good. It sets a tone of quality that city planners should insist on when for-profit housing developers return to the boulevard.

"The difference between market-rate and affordable housing developers is that the latter are looking for durability and life-cycle costs," said Ellipses' Greg Klosowski. "They're holding onto this property. They want materials that will last."

People who care about Hayes Valley have had the same sort of goal all along. They're open to creativity and change - and as Proxy and Octavia Court show, that openness is paying off.

Place appears on Tuesdays. E-mail John King at jking@sfcchronicle.com.

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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

MAYOR LEE ANNOUNCES HUD FUNDING FOR VETERANS COMMONS

San Francisco, CA— Mayor Edwin M. Lee today announced the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant of $1.07 million to the Veterans Commons housing project at 150 Otis Street, a new permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless, senior veterans in San Francisco. The grant is part of HUD’s investment in local projects in California which have never received HUD homeless funds in the past, providing critically needed housing and support services to homeless individuals and families.

“The men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces deserve the greatest respect and dignity for having sacrificed so much for our nation,” said Mayor Lee. “San Francisco is committed to helping veterans transition out of military service after returning home and providing them services they need. We are doing this the San Francisco way by providing permanent supportive housing for our most vulnerable veterans.”

“Today, we build on this Administration’s goal to prevent and end homelessness in America,” said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan “This funding will make a significant impact in the lives of thousands of people and provide resources to put them on the road of independence.”

“I am heartened that the $37 million in homeless grants comes to California at a time when they are needed more than ever before,” said HUD Region IX Administrator Ophelia Basgal. “These programs offer more than just a roof for homeless individuals and families. They also provide support services to a population with many important needs.”

Spearheaded by community-based non-profit organizations, Swords to Plowshares and Chinatown Community Development Center, the Veterans Commons housing project will provide 75 chronically homeless and senior veterans with permanent homes and wrap-around care. The property for Veterans Commons, a landmark building located at 150 Otis Street, was made available through the City’s Surplus Property program and has been supported by the Mayor’s Office of Housing, Human Services Agency and the Department of Public Health. Funders for Veterans Commons include the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Mayor’s Office of Housing, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, the Federal Home Loan Bank’s Affordable Housing Program, and now HUD. Former Mayor Gavin Newsom in November 2010 joined veterans and community organizations to break ground on Veterans Commons, which is scheduled to open in January 2013.

“Nationally, the Obama Administration and VA Secretary Shinseki are implementing perhaps the most effective policies I have seen in my thirty-plus years as a veteran advocate and service provider,” said Swords to Plowshares Executive Director Michael Blecker. “They have rallied unprecedented cooperation with HUD to provide housing vouchers, bringing us all closer to meeting the 5-year plan to eliminate veteran homelessness.”

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