INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency Commissioners

FROM: Fred Blackwell, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Media Clippings from 12/23/09 to 1/15/10

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

(Originated by Gia Casteel-Brown, Executive Assistant)

Fred Blackwell
Executive Director

BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT & SHIYARD:

Attachment 1: SF Gate: “S.F.’s Home-Field Edge”, December 22, 2009

Attachment 2: SF Gate: “Santa and San Francisco Homes under $600K: myth or reality? (Part 1)”, December 22, 2009


MISSION BAY:


Attachment 5: SF Gate: “Good Design Starts to Bloom in Mission Bay,” December 24, 2009

TRANSBAY TERMINAL:

Attachment 6: SF Gate: “State Ruling Fails to Clear Terminal Location,” January 8, 2010

SFRA:

Attachment 7: SF Gate: “Newsom sees hope for Mid-Market”, January 15, 2010
The good news for San Francisco 49er fans is that the team appears committed to staying in the Bay Area, even if plans for a new stadium in Santa Clara fall through. The bad news for San Francisco is that the team's fallback option is across the bay in Oakland.

Team President Jed York told our Matier & Ross on Friday that a new stadium at the site currently occupied by the Oakland Coliseum, most likely with the Raiders "just makes more sense" than Hunters Point as a backup choice. He cited the Coliseum's freeway access and BART stop as part of its advantages in "location and the infrastructure."

Then again, San Francisco's advantages don't begin and end with the sentimental value of having been the 49ers' ancestral home and the site of The Catch, myriad Montana-to-Rice memories and a dynasty that produced five Super Bowl victories. It also offers world-class hotels, waterfront views and an international brand that would appeal to the image-conscious NFL - which probably will be asked to help finance a new stadium.

The infrastructure concerns cited by York are very real, of course, and must be addressed if the Hunters Point site is to gain serious consideration. The city's political leadership and representatives of the Lennar Corp., which has left space for a stadium in its plans to redevelop the former Navy shipyard, have suggested that San Francisco has the political clout in the nation's capital to get federal assistance for the infrastructure work. They note that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has made the Bayview a priority since she entered Congress, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., is adamant about keeping the 49ers in San Francisco.

York's latest comments have spelled out the challenge for San Francisco's elected leaders: It's not enough to talk a good game. If they want to keep the 49ers, as they should, they need to show that the serious access problems can be solved.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/12/22/EDIT1B7LR6.DTL

This article appeared on page A - 19 of the San Francisco Chronicle
Santa and San Francisco homes under $600K: myth or reality? (Part 1)

Area 1: Bayview-Hunter’s Point

Like Santa, an affordable single-family home is something many San Francisco adults give up on. Yet, the economy has in fact made ownership of the latter more possible than it has been for years.

We are well aware that still, since the census clocks SF’s average income at less than $80K, that these newly lower-priced homes will still not be priced low enough, and this town will remain the heavily renter-occupied city it is now—barring some major disaster (natural or economic). But for those determined buyers who believe that the areas offering deals now will turn around later, 2010 may be their year.

The first such area is Bayview-Hunter’s Point. Many an SF Gate commenter has written things like “Who’d want to live in Bayview?”, or, worse: “No one wants to live in Bayview-Hunter’s Point.” It doesn’t take much logic to dismantle both these statements, since clearly, people do want to and in fact do actually live in Bayview. Quoting writer Ken McCarthy, the area offers one of “the highest percentage of home ownership of any district in the city.”

Another point in the area’s favor is that it will soon be the focus of tremendous development, thanks to the passing of Prop. G, through which 61% of San Francisco voters endorsed the Lennar Corp $1.2 billion development project at the Hunter’s Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point. This project will be, according to the San Francisco Building and Trade’s Council, “the city’s largest redevelopment project since World War II.”

Sensibly then, buying in Bayview now could be seen as an investment--and not only monetary, since we also know that home ownership is a stabilizing force in a community. And for the middle-class in this city, who’ve long been screwed since its members are a) not rich enough to buy here; and b) not poor enough poor to get help from the city, District 10 offers both a chance to own as well as a chance to be a part of helping the area get the attention and services it needs.

One commenter, writing as “Hurdler Rob” on the blog “SF Homes: How much it takes to get in the door, part II, phrases the point beautifully:
As a Bayview resident, I know there are a number of properties under this $715k line if not the majority, and I realize that goes with the stigma of the Bayview and how outsiders assume it to all be Hunters Point Projects. But for those who believe in the current and planned development, (HP Shipyard and City Eastern Neighborhood Plan), who can see the gentrification and transformation happening, some of these sub $715K properties in the Bayview are a steal with a little elbow grease. Many are short sales or foreclosures as well which can account for the very low end.

With that in mind, here are three homes in the Bayview area under $600K...way under.

1. 1544 Shafter Ave: A 3 bed/1 bath short-sale for $410K.

2. 1486 Oakdale: A 2 bed/2 bath recently back on the market home, offered for $258,900. Note that this home sold in 2004 for $404K, so the idea that it might again be worth that much, or more, is plausible.

3. 1630 Yosemite Ave: 3 bed/2 bath for $449K. This is a good sized, decent looking home that has been listed and relisted several times in the past year. It's also back on the market after falling out of contract, so the current asking price should be negotiable (especially as it was sold in 2007 for $250K).
And Bayview-Hunter's Point is not the only neighborhood in which a buyer can find homes for under $600K. We'll investigate further in future blogs.

Posted By: Anna Marie Hibble (Email) | December 22 2009 at 09:00 AM

Listed Under: Affordable housing, Bay View-Hunter's Point, Cost savings, Financial Crisis, Fixer upper, Foreclosure, Home prices, Home Sales, Housing crisis, Leveraging home value, Price reductions, Real estate business, Real estate data, Real estate finance, Real Estate Listings, Sales, San Francisco

And in Evansville, you can enjoy horrible weather year round (summer tornadoes, winter freezing rains), right-wing Christian fundamentalists, nonexistent public services and considerable semi-rural poverty. Sure, your neighborhood will be safe and clean - well, except for the meth factory down the street. I wonder if you don't mean that "your neighborhood will be white."

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According to city-data.com, crime has been lower in Evansville than in SF every year between 1999 and 2008, inclusive. That's a stronger point in its favor than what do the people look like.

Recommend: (4) (1)

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http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/ontheblock/detail?entry_id=53928
For years, critics of the plan to redevelop the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard have said the project is kicking up toxic dust and causing residents to have nosebleeds, headaches and other health problems. But a draft of a federal report obtained by The Chronicle found the project has effective safeguards in place to minimize asbestos exposure.

The report by the Environmental Protection Agency is the latest in a string that have found the project to be safe, despite lawsuits, a record fine and more than three years of heated public hearings as activists seek to halt the work.

The draft report found that monitoring procedures are effectively minimizing "dust generation and limiting asbestos exposure." The EPA also saw "no reason to suspend or stop the construction project," which calls for 10,500 homes to be built over two decades in an ambitious effort to transform the city's southeastern waterfront.

The EPA's analysis is a vindication of sorts for Mayor Gavin Newsom, who has pushed the project. Newsom was hounded on the campaign trail during his failed gubernatorial bid by followers of Nation of Islam minister Christopher Muhammad who contend the project is sickening residents. The local Nation of Islam chapter has a school nearby.

"After more than three years, Minister Christopher Muhammad has still failed to generate a single shred of reputable scientific evidence that the construction on phase one of Hunters Point shipyard was harmful to the surrounding community," said Michael Cohen, head of the mayor's economic development office. "The fact that Barack Obama's EPA has joined the long list of federal, state and local agencies that agree there is no reason to stop this project is important because of the Obama administration's strong commitment to environmental justice."

Still skeptical

Not everyone is convinced of the latest findings, saying that the project is spreading naturally occurring asbestos that is causing health problems among nearby residents. Asbestos, a fibrous mineral, is sent airborne when earth is broken and graded for construction. Long-term exposure can cause cancer.

Marie Harrison, a Bayview-Hunters Point resident and organizer with Greenaction, questioned the EPA's testing methods, especially since individual residents were not screened.

"I would love to believe that they did this, I really truly would. But if I'm going to believe anything, I've got to see
Leon Muhammad, dean at the local Nation of Islam school, refused to comment on the EPA report. Christopher Muhammad could not be reached.

The EPA's study looked at existing data from 10 monitors around the 75-acre first-phase site. The monitors work like vacuums, sucking air into a small canister, which contains a filter that is analyzed at a lab. The agency also reanalyzed 34 filters from "some of the worst-case situations" using a more detailed method.

It found that the "oversight of the project is appropriate" and that the standard local officials use actually resulted in a more conservative approach than the EPA method, the draft report said.

The city's public health chief, Mitch Katz, has repeatedly testified that the construction is safe, and the city's efforts have been backed by the state Department of Health Services and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Fine and lawsuits**

However, readying the site for construction hasn't come without problems.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District fined Lennar Urban, the developer partnering with the city, $515,000 in September 2008 - the largest fine in the district's history for a dust violation - for failing to properly monitor the air, maintain stations for washing dust off vehicles and contain dust from roadways out of the worksite.

According to air district officials, there was missing data from May through July 2006 after one of Lennar's consultants failed to properly calibrate monitoring equipment.

But the air district maintains that there was no evidence "of any kind of definitive health hazard," said spokeswoman Lisa Fasano.

Two former Lennar employees also sued the company in March 2007, alleging the company violated state law by retaliating against them for raising questions about the dust problems at the construction site. They also claim that they were victims of racial discrimination.

The lawsuit was settled out of court in January 2008 after Lennar failed to get it dismissed, records show. Representatives on both sides declined to comment on the amount.

A second lawsuit, filed in June on behalf of more than a dozen children who live or go to school in the neighborhood, contends Lennar "on many occasions" failed to stop work despite asbestos levels far exceeding the cut-off threshold. A trial is set for July.

Sam Singer, a Lennar spokesman, called the lawsuit "without merit."
By Anrica Deb

What is the attraction of abandoned urban places? Is it the feeling of something forgotten, a type of abstract, collective nostalgia? Maybe these places provide relief from engineered cityscapes, decaying into something unplanned and wild. Or maybe they’re just weedy and oil-stained eyesores.

For years, old Chronicle stories couldn’t find words beyond “industrial wasteland” to describe the 300 hundred acres of lonely rail yard that since the 1970s has been a good spot for hitting a few golf balls or parking a houseboat or decrepit Winnebago.

Not anymore.

Today, Mission Bay has entered a phase of prolonged identity crisis, a little manicured development here, a little weedy nothingness there.

The houseboats remain, as does some of the wasteland gestalt, but now every square foot is zoned and planned. Some blocks are crystallizing into shining, glassy biotech, tidy landscaping, condos, and parks. Thousands of adults and hundreds of children have moved in. The commercial and social hub of the neighborhood, Fourth Street, will open early next year.

And those other blocks, the central bulk of the neighborhood? They’re still indefinitely dormant, victim to yet another recession, and there’s no telling when it will be filled. Maybe soon, maybe not. Read more here.
Until a year ago, it seemed as though the only urban design lessons in Mission Bay were cautionary tales.

San Francisco’s 303-acre rail-yard-turned-redevelopment district was filling up with buildings mostly boxy and bland, sterile and safe. Public spaces had a stilted, empty feel.

Now, nearly a decade after construction began, things are starting to get interesting. There’s more architectural variety, more reason to linger - and while Mission Bay has plenty of room for improvement, anyone who explores on foot can find urban design tips to take back home. Here are six:

Bold can be a blessing. Buildings that play it safe are fine when their neighbors deserve the spotlight - but Mission Bay came out of the gate with too many structures that resembled packing crates more than anything else. That’s why the Arterra and Avalon Bay towers framing Fifth Street add a welcome flair with strong colors and emphatic forms, they’re visual anchors for an area that has been architecturally adrift. Architects: Arterra, Kwan Henmi. Avalon at Mission Bay III, Arquitectonica.

"Public space" is where you find it. Besides a design that resembles a rectangular collage, the newest Avalon Bay apartment complex includes a private courtyard reached from Berry Street. But the public stairs leading up to it form the biggest stoop you’ve ever seen. There’s shelter from afternoon wind, sunlight on summer days and a view of Mission Creek. With luck, it will become a front porch for the community at large and bring this alleyway to life. Arquitectonica.

Infrastructure can shine. Like many neighborhoods, Mission Bay needs pumping stations so that storm waters flow out to sea rather than flood nearby streets. But not many places conceive of them as sculptures, wrapping the control room and generator behind channel glass and ceramic tiles topped by a V-shaped metal roof. This wasn’t by chance - city watchdogs pushed hard - but it’s a wonderful model to follow from here on. Tom Eliot Fisch.

Background buildings can backfire. There’s nothing wrong with the architecture of Strata, the first apartment building south of Mission Creek: It lines Fourth Street with a collection of bays popping out here and there, in hues from gray to beige. But the housing market has slammed to a halt, so Strata is flanked by empty space on all sides, a situation that won’t soon end. The residents get wide-open views; we get an eight-story shrug. SB Architects.

Parks take time to blossom. When the central green was unveiled at UCSF Mission Bay, it seemed overly artistic with steep sculpted hills, thick-planted pines and low rustic seating walls. Now the landscape has matured in a way that’s an expressive counterpoint to the broad squat buildings around it. It’s a great spot to lose yourself and...
Good design starts to bloom in Mission Bay a welcome shot of nature on a campus that can still feel sterile. *PWP Landscape Architecture.*

Let the ground floor breathe. Mission Bay tries for a neighborly feel by requiring first-floor units in housing complexes. Great theory - except the units tend to be exposed like fishbowls, so residents keep their drapes pulled tight. Fortunately, some recent projects include a bit of buffer space. At Crescent Cove on Berry Street, the housing is a few steps up from the sidewalk, with small porches helping add a sense of separation. Hey, it's a start. *David Baker + Partners.*

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/12/24/MNTE1AIUG1.DTL

This article appeared on page A - 9 of the San Francisco Chronicle
State ruling fails to clear terminal location

John Coté, Chronicle Staff Writer

Friday, January 8, 2010

When high-speed rail comes to San Francisco, in 2020 or beyond, it will end at the rebuilt Transbay Terminal.

But exactly where that terminal will be is still a matter of contention even though the state attorney general's office recently released a memo to help clear up a dispute over the location between the state agency that will build the rail lines and the Bay Area agency constructing the terminal.

The Transbay Joint Powers Authority is fearful the uncertainty could undermine its bid for $400 million in federal stimulus funds to help build the station.

The authority - along with ballot measures, years of planning and millions of dollars in prep work - have all put the station at the current Transbay Terminal site, a bus station at First and Mission streets.

While the California High-Speed Rail Authority maintains the Transbay Terminal is also its preferred site, officials there say state environmental laws require that they consider alternatives.

Those alternatives are: ending the high-speed line at a revamped terminal at the Caltrain station at Fourth and King streets, splitting high-speed rail traffic between the Transbay Terminal and the Fourth and King station, and locating the station on Beale Street perpendicular to the proposed Transbay Transit Center and a block and a half from its planned 1,000-foot iconic tower.

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul, said in a Dec. 28 letter to the High-Speed Rail Authority "the Transbay Terminal must be part of the high speed rail system" after voters approved a statewide bond measure that names it as the northern terminus.

But that measure leaves wiggle room because it "does not define the Transbay Terminal," Sproul wrote.

"We believe that the voters intended to include (although not necessarily be limited to) the site of the" planned Transbay Transit Center since that is where the existing Transbay Terminal is located, Sproul wrote.

She went on to say that the high-speed rail authority is not obligated to approve a terminal project that conforms precisely with what Transbay officials are planning.

The terminal could include "alternative configurations," like some aspects of the Beale Street option, but those "cannot supplant the Transbay Terminal as a San Francisco terminus," she wrote.

Transbay officials have already studied and rejected the so-called Beale Street alternative as infeasible, saying it would cost an extra $4 billion and could undermine the stability of the Bay Bridge. It would also require the acquisition of federal land and the demolition of a 288-unit condominium complex and another 136-unit tower.

With right-of-way issues, more than 1,800 residences would be impacted, said Supervisor Chris Daly, who
The proposal has drawn sharp criticism from Rincon Hill residents, who say it has cast a pall over already diminished property values.

"If I lost my job today, I would have to sell my unit," said Jamie Whitaker, a neighborhood blogger who lives in one of the buildings under the cloud of demolition. "If I did, it wouldn't be worth much."

Mehdi Morshed, the rail authority's executive director, said the Beale Street location or something else in the general vicinity could be considered a Transbay Terminal station.

"Anywhere in or around the (existing) Transbay Terminal is the Transbay Terminal, including Beale Street," he said.

City officials and others dispute that, saying it contradicts Prop 1A and a vote by the Legislature.

"A high-speed rail station between Main and Beale streets would be a different location, and it would be forbidden by law," said Andrew Schwartz, an attorney for the Transbay Joint Powers Authority.

Daly also scoffed at the idea.

"It's a block away," Daly said. "They're close enough that you don't want to build two (stations) right there, but they're far enough away that they're not the same parcel."

Sproul said there would be "continuing discussions."

The High-Speed Rail Authority is launching a search for a new executive director. 

Staff Writer Michael Cabanatuan contributed to this report. E-mail John Cote at jcote@sfchronicle.com.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/01/08/BATE1BF53K.DTL

This article appeared on page C - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle
Newsom sees hope for mid-Market

Heather Knight, Jill Tucker
Friday, January 15, 2010

Mayors dating back to at least Dianne Feinstein have pledged to turn the beleaguered stretch of Market Street between Fifth Street and Van Ness Avenue into a world-class thoroughfare, but anybody who’s walked through the seedy area lately knows the dream has never materialized.

But this time is different, Mayor Gavin Newsom promised Thursday. Standing in a packed Show Dogs, a new upscale hot dog joint at Golden Gate Avenue and Market, Newsom ticked off a host of initiatives he says will at long last improve the blighted area.

"This is not the Champs-Élysées," Newsom said, referring to the upscale, beautiful boulevard in Paris and also making perhaps the biggest political understatement of the new year.

Most of the initiatives have been discussed before by Newsom including using $11.5 million in federal money to give area businesses loans, beautifying the street, renovating the old Hibernia Bank building, working with local arts groups to create an arts district, continuing to ban cars traveling east on Market, and installing a large retail center in the area.

"I've got two years left, and I don't want to be just another mayor who didn't deliver on Market Street," Newsom said.

Perhaps most notable was the mayor's pledge to dust off the redevelopment plan for the

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/01/15/BAUH1BIE93.DTL

Newsom sees hope for mid-Market area that was scuttled by the Board of Supervisors in 2005 because of disagreements over the appropriate levels of affordable housing.

Asked how the same plan can this time be approved by a similarly left-leaning board, Newsom said, "Well, I don't know, term limits?" The quip was taken by many in attendance as a jab at Supervisor Chris Daly - the Newsom nemesis, mid-Market representative and affordable housing champion who is termed out of office in a year.

Daly said his successor will probably be a strong proponent of affordable housing, too, and said of Newsom's take-two, "It's likely not to go anywhere."

- Heather Knight

New leaders: The school board gavel changed hands this week as the seven commissioners elected Jane Kim to the presidency and Hydra Mendoza as the vice president at their meeting Tuesday.

Kim, who served as vice president last year, noted that with the tenure of outgoing President Kim-Shree Maufas, the board will see a trifecta of women of color leading the board.

Kim and Mendoza, elected to the board with Maufas in 2006, were the only nominees for the top two posts during the Tuesday board meeting.

Also Tuesday, the board approved a new policy that doesn't look like much on paper but could decrease palpable public frustration at the guaranteed late starts of the board meetings. The biweekly gatherings are supposed to start at 6 p.m., but never do, sometimes kicking off 20 to 30 minutes late.

The new policy allows the vice president of the board to start the meeting if the president has not done so by 6:10 p.m. as long as a quorum is present. And if the meeting still hasn't started by 6:15 p.m. it then falls to the most senior board member to bang the gavel in a call to order.

We salute this effort to get the ball rolling at the designated ball-rolling time - or at least within 10 minutes of that.

With some school board meetings hitting the six-hour mark and beyond, starting on time seems like such a great idea.

- Jill Tucker

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