

PLAYING BALL

City plans makeover for Candlestick Park

Vision for homes, shops — with or without stadium

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SPENCER BROWN

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San Francisco leaders and developers say they don't need football players to score a touchdown with redevelopment plans for Candlestick Park and the Bayview.

Miami-based Lennar Corp. and the city plan thousands of homes as well as shops, restaurants, artists' studios, parks and open space at Candlestick Park and the long-neglected Bayview Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, but whether the 49ers play ball with the city to rebuild a stadium there remains to be seen.

“This project is bigger than the 49ers,” said Michael Cohen, director of base reuse and development for the city. “If the 49ers don't come, we'll have no shortage of suitors for compelling alternative uses.”

The transformation will occur with or without the NFL franchise, said Kofi Bonner, president of Lennar's Bay Area division, referring to the 49ers announcement that it wants to rebuild in Santa Clara.

“I believe the 49ers will see how desirable the shipyard location is and how perfectly it fits their needs and they will ultimately choose to stay in San Francisco,” Bonner said. “But we have been clear with the 49ers — while we are intent on giving them a

viable option, we are also intent on moving on a time frame that makes sense for Lennar and for the city.”

Big vision

The proposal is part of a longtime city pledge to bring economic vitality to the struggling and neglected southeast area of the city. Projects for nearby Executive Park and Visitacion Valley are also heating up, making this corner of San Francisco a hot spot for future development.

Plans at the Hunters Point Shipyard call for 2,000 homes, 70,000 square feet of retail space, a new 49ers stadium and green space for game parking or recreational use.

CANDLESTICK: Plan includes pledge for jobs

After demolishing the existing stadium at Candlestick, Lennar plans another 6,500 homes, 700,000 square feet of retail space and an 8,000 to 12,000-seat arena for performances and sporting events. Lennar has also agreed to rebuild the 45-year-old, 256-unit Alice Griffith public housing project near Candlestick.

The developments, which will involve the transfer of land from the city to Lennar, are worth billions of dollars. But infrastructure costs alone will cost Lennar \$1.5 billion.

Should the 49ers opt to build a stadium in Santa Clara as the team has said it is exploring, the Hunters Point stadium site could be used for research and development, light industrial or open space, Bonner said.

Work has already begun on the first 63-acre parcel of the shipyard where 1,600 homes will be built in the next five years. Development of the remaining parcels of the shipyard and of Candlestick Park are at least three years away due to the length of the planning process.

The Candlestick portion of the development, which will require demolition of the existing stadium, will likely not occur until

the start of the 2012 football season when the 49ers plan to move to a new stadium.

Development in the area

While Lennar must wait a few years to move dirt, a number of developers are going forward with plans to build thousands of homes at Executive Park directly southeast of Candlestick Park. Plans are to transform the 71-acre office-oriented park into a waterfront residential community with pedestrian-friendly walkways, cafes and shops.

The plan is for about 8,000 residents in 2,800 homes and 60,000 square feet of retail. Four developers are building the homes. Signature Properties has already built 125 of its planned 499 units, and Top Vision Corp. has sold out the first phase of its 769 homes and is working on its second phase of 176 homes. The other developers are Universal Paragon Corp., which plans to build 1,100 homes, and Executive Park's original developer, Yerby Corp., which plans 500 homes.

Jonathan Scharfman, director of development for Universal Paragon, said Executive Park and Lennar's planned developments complement each other.

"We believe Executive Park and Candlestick Park will be looked at as one new neighborhood in 20 to 25 years," Scharfman said. "Because (Executive Park) will have a more mature initial neighborhood, I don't believe we'll be competing directly."

Bonner agrees, saying the company believes the development in Executive Park "needs to happen."

"We think it's appropriate for Executive Park to establish that location as a premier location in the city," Bonner said.

Together, Executive Park and Lennar's plans for Candlestick and Hunters Point promise to dramatically transform the long-neglected southeastern section of San Francisco, bringing it up to par with such San Francisco redevelopment successes as Giants Stadium, the Ferry Building and Mission Bay, Bonner said.

"The shipyard closed in (1974)," he said. "That's a long time for people in Bayview to be looking at essentially an industrial wasteland. Isn't it time we came up with a plan for the southeastern section of the city that can be a pictureperfect postcard?"

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