



Home is Where the Heart Is

**A People-Powered Community Vision for the
Balboa Park Upper Yard, Excelsior District**



Communities United for Health & Justice
Coleman Advocates, Filipino Community Center, and PODER in collaboration with Asian Neighborhood Design
July 2012

Acknowledgements

Like any community planning project, this was a true neighborhood-wide effort, with community residents planning and leading the way, combining the first-hand knowledge and community expertise of numerous community members, both young and old, recent and long time residents, and speakers of Tagalog, Spanish, Chinese and English.

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1. Our Story



“Growing up in this neighborhood, my story is that of many residents in the Excelsior. I remember when La Loma produce was a bank that gave out free candy, and Balboa High was painted white and blue. My school years were spent making the trek from my Excelsior home to Civic Center in the ever famous “BMW” (Bart/Muni/Walking) – the transportation of choice for many young people that live on this side of the city. As so many still do, I patiently waited at Balboa Park BART for my #54 bus to come.”

~ Christina Cañaveral

Community worker, born and raised in the Excelsior District

San Francisco has been defined by its historic and culturally rich neighborhoods. Chinatown, North Beach, the Mission, and Japantown, are famous, but the Excelsior district of San Francisco is like no other. Strolling down Mission Street, one is struck by the cultural diversity that is present in every storefront. Smells of pork buns mingle with aromas of *tacos al pastor*, while old Italian delis intermix with *pancit* and *siopao*. The hills that go up to McClaren Park are dotted with colorful homes and a diverse population of families that include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and little cousins playing at the park.

Yes, this district is the epitome of the utopian San Francisco – as international as its street names; one will hear over 10 different dialects in just an eight block stroll down Mission Street. In many ways, it is our City’s heart and soul, representing the many generations of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

There is another side to this story – the skyrocketing costs of housing, the doubling and tripling up of families in apartments and houses, and the ever-increasing levels of foreclosures. Economic forces and City Hall policies contribute to a lack of affordable housing, unemployment and underemployment, and increasing hardship within our neighborhood. Our neighborhood has the highest population of families in the city, as well as the highest number of seniors and school aged children. Together, the people and land are our community’s greatest

resource. Ours is a story of a neighborhood discovering under-utilized talents, re-envisioning neighborhood spaces, and leading community development efforts that are designed by the very people that will benefit from them.

We hope that this document will demonstrate the range of community support and consensus, as well as a people-powered vision to address the opportunities and challenges of developing the Balboa Park Station Upper Yard.

Who We Are

Communities United for Health and Justice (CUHJ) is an alliance of three community-based organizations in San Francisco's District 11: Filipino Community Center (FCC), PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights), and Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth. Our organizations joined forces in 2008 to focus on four key issues affecting our communities, including affordable housing, economic justice, youth empowerment, and immigrants' rights. We actively develop grassroots leadership and are committed to creating long lasting change in our communities. Throughout these pages you'll hear voices and testimony from members of our organizations.

PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights) is a grassroots membership organization based in the Excelsior, Mission, and other southeast San Francisco neighborhoods. For 21 years, PODER has achieved important victories that have restored our environment, strengthened our communities, and created assets in our neighborhoods for generations to come. Organizing together with Latino immigrant youth, families, and elders, PODER is committed to supporting solutions emerging from our vibrant streets. PODER embraces the goals of urban sustainability, economic resiliency, and environmental justice. PODER has created assets in our neighborhoods by converting vacant lots into thriving neighborhood parks and long-term affordable housing, reducing harmful lead poisoning and diesel truck pollution in our neighborhoods, and leading grassroots planning efforts and policy campaigns to restore our environment and promote healthy development.

Filipino Community Center (FCC) provides a safe space where Filipino families can access services, meet, and hold activities, and works to improve our collective capacity to address our immediate and long term needs, with a commitment to the low-income and underserved, through organizing, advocacy, and

service, and builds civic participation and grassroots leadership, and to strengthen our commitment and responsibility to each other, our community, and the larger society. One of their principal goals is to ensure that Filipino individuals, seniors and families have increased access to social services to address their basic needs, such as affordable child-care, healthcare, housing, nutrition, and recreational activities.

Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth believes in the power of youth, parents and everyday people to transform their schools, their communities, and their own lives. Coleman Advocates is a member-led, multi-racial community organization working to create a city of hope, opportunity, and justice for all children and all families in San Francisco. Over the last 30 years, Coleman has become the leading voice for low to moderate-income youth and families in San Francisco. Coleman works to stop the displacement of working families and families of color from San Francisco, increase education and economic opportunities for low-income families and young people of color, and ensure all children's right to a secure future in their own city. Through grassroots leadership development, youth and parent organizing, budget and policy advocacy, civic engagement and strategic alliance building, Coleman has transformed public institutions, improved

the lives of tens of thousands of residents, and become a national model for community-driven change.

In addition, **Asian Neighborhood Design's** community planning program contributed technical assistance, workshop design and facilitation, concept designs, and report writing and layout to support this effort.

Our Vision

Our vision for communities that are healthy, thriving, equitable and just, lie in the following principles:

- ❖ We believe in expanding community ownership over land by creating more affordable housing, expanding locally owned businesses, creating community controlled institutions, and acquiring private land to be used for community needs.
- ❖ We believe affordable family housing should be built together with parks, schools, public transportation, grocery stores, childcare facilities, recreational centers, and community centers.
- ❖ We believe our City must build homes and apartments that are affordable to a range of very-low, low-income, and moderate-income people, for all kinds of families and family sizes.
- ❖ We believe in community planning processes that build the leadership of

low income, immigrant, youth, and working class resident of our community and address economic, racial and social inequalities today and far into the future.

- ❖ We believe that people who live in our community have the right to continue living in our community.
- ❖ We believe that low-income families of District 11 should have equal access to quality, safe, healthy, and truly affordable rental and ownership housing as families in other areas of the city.

Four prominent themes emerged from our research and the visioning process shared by community members during our workshops:

1. The Upper Yard at Balboa Park Station is a critical priority for development due to its public ownership, underutilization, location, size and zoning that make it ripe for affordable housing development;
2. The challenges posed by noise, air pollution, and the BART tunnel structure at the Upper Yard site, can all be overcome with appropriate design and without incurring exorbitant costs;
3. By its location at a transit node, the Upper Yard can be a focal point for transit-oriented and “sustainable communities” funding in the city and region,



Balboa Park Station Upper Yard Site,
Excelsior District, corner of San Jose
Avenue and Geneva

and the challenges posed by affordable housing financing can be overcome by identifying sites such as these that will help garner community support for a city housing trust fund; and

4. There is a wide community support and consensus for a mixed-use affordable housing development at the Upper Yard site beginning with the neighborhood effort culminating in the Balboa Park Station Area Plan and continued with the community planning process led by PODER, the Filipino Community Center, and Coleman Advocates.



2. Small Neighborhood, Big Heart: Community Development

CUHJ's community planning efforts began in 2010 when PODER members began to gather information on the land uses in the Excelsior neighborhood. Using a tally sheet and pencil, youth, adult, and elder community members walked up and down the commercial corridor to identify the neighborhood's community assets as well as unmet needs. The key needs that were identified include:

1. **Community Services.** A lack of needed services, such as job training centers, senior centers, childcare facilities, youth programs, and especially an affordable neighborhood health clinic that serves the diversity of populations and languages in the community.
2. **Recreational Spaces.** Few public plazas or spaces for people to sit together and socialize, for children to play, tell stories, hang out and share our cultures and traditions, especially multi-generational spaces where all can come together; A lack of family entertainment venues and all ages clubs.
3. **Commercial Activities.** A need for affordable commercial space and business incubator spaces where local entrepreneurs can develop small business opportunities; Various empty storefronts while small businesses and services cannot afford the inflated rents; Commercial corridor provides limited options for organic foods, farmers markets, and nutritious foods.
4. **Housing.** Not enough housing that is affordable to working families, elders, young adults, or homeless people.
5. **Underutilized Spaces.** Many parking lots that are aching to be filled up with people, neighborhood services, affordable housing, gardens, and community activities; Relatively few number of large empty lots in the neighborhood that have development potential: four are larger privately-owned sites that could support creative redevelopment, three on Mission Street and one on Ocean Avenue, though all currently have businesses operating in them, two smaller privately-owned empty lots, at Mission & Russia and on Geneva & Alemany, one large publicly-owned lot recently rezoned for higher density mixed-use development.



Community Planning Process

In early 2011 CUHJ developed a comprehensive work plan to engage over 100 diverse Excelsior residents in a community-based planning process that would involve grassroots outreach, education, leadership development, and engagement with key decision makers to advance people-powered development planning in the neighborhood. CUHJ applied for and received a Community Planning grant from the Mayor's Office of Housing to carry out this work. In the initial phase of the project and throughout, CUHJ conducted skills training and leadership development to build the capacity of

12-15 everyday residents and community members to become grassroots community planners.

City Collaboration. Prior to and throughout the development of this work, CUHJ met with key city officials, agencies and departments. In addition to meeting and presenting on-site and in the neighborhood directly to Mayor Ed Lee and District 11 Supervisor John Avalos, CUHJ also met with board, staff, and representatives of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Planning Department, the Department of Public Health, the Redevelopment Agency, the Mayor's Office of Housing, BART, and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development. These meetings discussed

the prospects, challenges, and solutions for project development of affordable housing at the Upper Yard Site.

Community Education & Participatory Action Research. We engaged in educational discussions and trainings on the history of land use, planning and community development, environmental racism, land reclamation strategies, urban design, community land trusts, and cooperative housing. We learned about housing finance and feasibility (in collaboration with Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center). We learned about the results of the 2010 census. We participated in regional tours of transit oriented development sites, and conducted a bicycle sustainability tour of the neighborhood. AND provided key design, mapping, and visioning trainings with community leaders and planners.

"We looked at what was around us, and realized that, although our neighborhood was still considered one of the most "affordable" to homebuyers in the city, it was becoming increasingly unaffordable to our own families and to future generations," said Terry Valen. We also realized that while other neighborhoods had a history of developing new permanently affordable housing controlled by community-based nonprofits, our neighborhood had only had one affordable development built in recent memory, the senior apartments at Crocker



Members of CUHJ participate in a regional site visit of BART redevelopment projects.

Amazon, almost a decade ago. Our members researched what had been built recently, what community resources we had, and looked at the vacant properties in our neighborhood. Community members identified the following goals to be met through our process:

1. We need stability in our rents and mortgages so we can stay in our neighborhood.
2. We want vacant or little-used sites built as affordable housing.
3. Parking lots owned by public agencies should be a priority for affordable housing.

Building on Previous Leadership & Community Planning Efforts. For our members, many of whom are immigrants with English as a second language, this was their first opportunity to engage with planning in their own neighborhood. However, we discovered that there had already been much work done by other community members toward identifying sites for mixed-use development and affordable housing, through the Balboa Park Plan, and were encouraged that there was already a consensus around the future of the Balboa Park station area. In addition, there has been a history of community advocacy focused on the restoration of the Geneva Car Barn and Powerhouse building, located across the street from

the Upper Yard site. This effort seeks to restore a historical resource to create an arts, performance, and youth serving facility. More recently, state, regional, and local planning efforts such as Senate Bill 375 have emphasized the need for more transit oriented development and the creation of sustainable communities.

Reaching Out to Our Neighborhood. In our community outreach and education, CUHJ reached out to neighborhood and district stakeholders including the Excelsior Community Conveners and the OMI Community Collaborative, collectively representing over 12 neighborhood organizations. We shared our work plan, sought input and feedback, and invited the wider community to our events and workshops at Balboa Park, the Upper Yard, and our “Community Visioning Forum” at Balboa High School. Representatives of the Excelsior Action Group, the Geneva Car Barn, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center, Out of Site Youth Arts Center, the Excelsior District Improvement Association, Excelsior Family Connections, OMI Beacon Center, and the Excelsior Boys & Girls Club were part of our broader outreach to the community. We continue this neighborhood planning work with the developing “Excelsior Planning Group” initiated with Supervisor Avalos’ office.



Conceptual plan for “Transit Station Neighborhood,” Balboa Park Plan.
Source: SF Planning Department.



3. Family Owned and Operated: Demographic Snapshot



Crocker Amazon Senior Apartments, the only permanently affordable housing in the entire neighborhood. Source: PODER.

The population and age, ethnicity, household size, and income level of residents, as well as housing stock all point to distinct affordable housing and community development needs in the neighborhood.

- ❖ **Population and Age.** According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-2009,¹ District 11, has a larger proportion of school-age children (5 to 17 years old), 13% compared to the citywide 9%, and of seniors (60 and over), 22% compared to the citywide 19%.
- ❖ **Ethnicity.** District 11 is the only district with a majority of foreign-born residents (52%) based on a report published by the San Francisco Office of Budget and Legislative Analyst,² Further, 72% of residents in District 11 speak a language other than English at home, and 16% of households have no English speaker at home.
- ❖ **Household Size.** An estimated 71% of District 11 residents are family households, compared to citywide proportion of 44% family households. Household sizes in the District are larger than elsewhere in the City and are increasing. The 2005-2009 ACS estimated average family household size at 4.7 persons per household, compared to the citywide averages of 3.5 persons per family household.
- ❖ **Income.** The Excelsior neighborhood is one of San Francisco's last bastions for working class families. Estimated per capita income for District 11 is about \$25,490, much lower than the citywide per capita income of \$44,400.³ Nearly 30% of Excelsior residents live in households earning less than 200% of the federal poverty line, with half of those residents in households earning less than 150%. As the economy continues to drive up demand for housing and more City households migrate southward, many of these "working poor" residents will be particularly vulnerable to the displacement already seen elsewhere in the City.
- ❖ **Housing.** District 11 has approximately 10% of the City's population, yet only 6% of the city's housing according to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. In recent years, given the high demand for affordable housing, more and more of the single family housing stock has been subdivided to create additional dwellings and in-law apartments. Among renters, nearly 60% paid more than

30% of their monthly income in rent between 2006 and 2010, a substantially higher proportion than in San Francisco overall. In addition, the District has seen high rates of foreclosure over the last 5 years.⁴

❖ **New Development.** The majority of new development is market rate, evidenced by a recent survey of housing development projects in the Mission corridor indicating that 17 market-rate projects were either permitted or built in the last five years. Only two affordable housing projects have been built in the District as a whole, the 36 unit Crocker Amazon Senior Apartments, and the 71 affordable units at 1100 Ocean Avenue in the OMI.

❖ **Transit.** The American Community Survey (2005-2009) found that car use in District 11 declined while transit increased for work trips.

❖ **Health Access.** 16.3% of residents in the Excelsior are uninsured, compared to 3.5% citywide. More than half of residents depend on entitlement programs such as Medi-Cal, Medicare, and Healthy SF. The nearest major health facility is St Luke's, half an hour away on public transit. 35.4% of surveyed Excelsior residents traveled for an hour or more to see a provider.⁵



"My family was the first generation to move into the Juan Pifarre Plaza Affordable Family Apartments. I raised my four children there. I am thankful to have had an affordable home for my family. Without affordable housing, I would not have been able to support my family and send my children to college."

~ Yolanda Ruiz, Member of PODER

Given these demographic realities—increasing pressure of a growing population, higher household sizes, and a comparatively lower median income—the housing that is needed in the District must be affordable to low and moderate-income families, and include larger bedroom counts, that allow for families with multiple children and intergenerational households. Older youth and young adults also need access to affordable units. There is a need for affordable housing that is accessible to all residents, regardless of the countries they come from or the languages they speak. There is also a need for housing that is close to public transportation.

Given the recent crisis in foreclosures and need to rebuild economic assets, new housing should include opportunities for affordable rental and ownership structures, including cooperative and land trust forms of housing.



4. The Upper Yard: An Opportunity Waiting to Happen!



Upper Yard site. Source: PODER.



Upper Yard site seen from the air. Source: Google.

Underutilized Sites, Publicly-Owned Parcels

Building on PODER's community planning efforts, CUHJ combined first-hand community based research and land use surveying with data collected from the city's Real Estate Department in order to identify under-utilized sites in the neighborhood and assess their potential for community development. CUHJ found a relatively few number of large empty lots, parking lots, and other underutilized sites in the neighborhood that have development potential.

Of the sites we identified, four are larger privately-owned sites that could support creative redevelopment, three on Mission Street and one on Ocean Avenue, though all currently had businesses operating in them. We also found two smaller privately-owned empty lots, at Mission & Russia and on Geneva & Alemany. In addition, one site is a large publicly-owned lot recently rezoned for higher density mixed-use development: the **Balboa Park BART Station Upper Yard**.

CUHJ worked with the housing development staff at Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (who had previously built an affordable senior building in the Excelsior, and is currently developing an affordable family building on Ocean Avenue in OMI) to take a closer look at the three sites that provide the most community development potential. They looked at four criteria, including 1) How much housing can be built; 2) what amenities are connected to the site; 3) what financing is attached to the site; and 4) what are the challenges of acquisition.

This analysis led the community to prioritize the Upper Yard as the best near term opportunity to realize the community's needs for affordable housing and community development. The Upper Yard is zoned for appropriate development and is backed by a Board of Supervisors approved land use plan adopted only a few years ago. Since it is publicly owned, it provides flexibility that is essential to facilitating complex development projects. Its status as a transit oriented development site brings regional support and financing opportunities. Moreover, the community at large has long been vocal in its desire to minimize the blight of the Upper Yard and see the site creatively re-

used. In addition, there are a number of community-based organizations that recognize that development of the Upper yard is critical to addressing the lack of affordable housing and are invested in moving the project forward in partnership with the City.

All the remaining sites are private, and there is no indication that any are currently for sale. One of the most promising of these, due to its size and location, currently has a church and parking lot, which can be very busy on weekends, but lies virtually unused during large parts of the week day. A potential development could be imagined that rebuilt a church and parking on the ground floors, with affordable housing above, but would require its own very complicated arrangements and structural issues to accommodate a large assembly use on the ground floor. Additionally, the current zoning outside of the immediate Balboa Park parcels limits development potential to four stories.

Upper Yard: Rail Yard to Bone Yard to Parking Lot

The Upper Yard is a roughly triangular site, about 80,000 sq. ft., or 1.8 acres in size, located at the intersection of San Jose and Geneva Avenues in San Francisco, across the street from Balboa

Park BART station. The site is divided into two main areas, a kiss-and-ride driveway and plaza space and stairs to the BART station, owned by BART, and a rail storage area that is currently used for Muni employee parking and is owned by SFMTA.

The area was historically situated within a network of agricultural sites and water beds, and used for active cultivation and irrigation by the Ohlone native communities and later immigrant settlers. The site then became part of a vibrant railway hub in 1904 beginning with regional passenger train service and subsequently intracity bus and light rail transit in the 1970s.

In recent years, however, the site has been underutilized, as it went from being a railyard, to a junkyard, and more recently a parking lot. The Upper Yard has historically provided infrastructural capacity to support transit operations. For a time it was known as one of several Muni “bone yards,” where out-of-commission trains and buses were stored for parts.

The Balboa Park BART station is the busiest station in the BART system, outside of the four Market Street stations. The station is also the busiest transit hub in the southern part of San Francisco, served by three Muni light rail lines and eight bus lines, in addition



Above: The Muni Bone Yard. Middle: Discarded MUNI railway hardware at the Upper Yard. Below: Current use as a parking lot.

to BART. Its close proximity to transit, schools, City College of San Francisco, and the Balboa Park recreation area, make it an ideal site for affordable housing.

The 2009 Balboa Park Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors identified the site as a key opportunity for mixed-use development adjacent to the Muni and BART station. The site is zoned as NCT-2, or Neighborhood Commercial Near Transit, with 40' to 85' height limits.

Many Neighborhood Assets of the Upper Yard Site

The Upper Yard site is located at the confluence of a variety of working class neighborhoods in the heart of District 11. It is rich in residential, educational, open space, and transit amenities as well as political resources.

Transit. Few San Francisco locations outside of downtown approach the level of transportation services offered at

the Balboa Park Station. The Balboa Park BART station is the busiest in the system, after the four downtown San Francisco stations, and serves over 12,000 daily riders. In addition, the San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) serves the area, with the 29-Sunset, 49-Van Ness-Mission, 43-Masonic, 15-Third Street, 54-Felton, 88-Bart Shuttle, 36-Teresita, and the MUNI metro lines J-Church, K-Ingleside, M-Ocean View.

Youth & Families. Children, youth, and young adults abound in the area given the numerous schools and colleges all within a stone's throw, including Balboa High School, James Denman Middle School, San Miguel Child Development Center, Lick Wilmerding High School, Leadership High School, and City College of San Francisco. In fact, District 11 has among the highest proportion of children, youth, and family households of any other district in the City.

Open Space. The area is rich in open space and recreational facilities. Balboa Park is one block away, and is a large public open space used by locals and visitors from throughout the city. The park provides four baseball fields, two large multi-use fields, children's play area, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a soccer stadium, soon-to-be-opened skate park, and other park amenities.



"I got here when I was 10 years old and I've never lived anywhere else. I like the Excelsior, I grew up here and my relatives live here. I want to stay in San Francisco but it's getting too expensive... Even though my family has four people working full time, it's not enough to make ends meet because we have to pay for car, insurance, groceries, utilities, health care, education, and sending money back home. Affordable housing would give people a better chance to live in a decent space without having to work double jobs."

~ Lyra Ibarra, 23. Nursing student, lived in the Excelsior since 1998, lives with seven people in a two-bedroom flat.



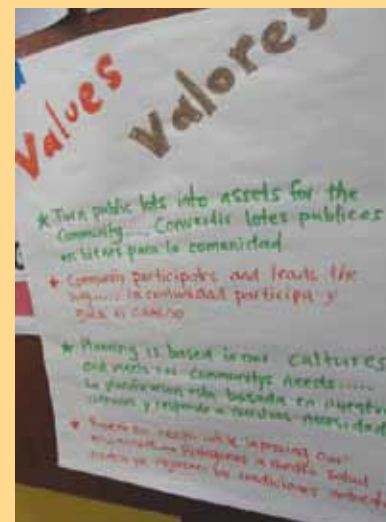
Community Tour of Upper Yard site.

Residential Character. East along Geneva and both up and down San Jose avenues, the neighborhood is very residential in character as a dense single-family home neighborhood developed in the 1930s and 1940s. A high concentration of neighborhood residents, students, workers, families, and transit passengers make for an extremely active pedestrian corner.

Principles and Values!

PODER, the Filipino Community Center, and Coleman Advocates propose a development for the Upper Yard that envisions a 100% affordable housing project with a combination of ground floor neighborhood serving commercial, community services, and public space. This is based on the following key components:

1. *Public land for public benefit;*
2. *Affordable homes for all;*
3. *Community spaces;*
4. *Protecting our health while improving our environment;*
5. *Community participation; and*
6. *City and community working together.*



Conclusion: Focus on the Upper Yard as a Priority Development Site

Our analysis has led the community to prioritize the Upper Yard as the best near term opportunity to realize the community's needs for affordable housing and community development. Following are 14 key reasons why this analysis concludes that the Upper Yard is a priority development site:

All Plans & Policies Support Upper Yard Development

1. The site has been identified as a Tier 1 site in the Balboa Park Station Area Plan, meaning that the City sees the site as a feasible location for development within the next five years.
2. The site is located in a "Preferred Development Area" identified by the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy, and may be eligible for HUD Sustainable Communities planning grants and the regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD)/Transit Oriented Affordable Housing (TOAH) Fund.
3. The site is zoned NCT for Neighborhood Commercial Transit mixed use development.

There is Tremendous Neighborhood Need

4. In the Excelsior, the increasing pressure of a growing population, higher

household sizes, and a comparatively lower median income all point to a high need for affordable housing.

5. While the Mayor's Office of Housing and nonprofit housing developers have site control of other sites in the City, none are in the Excelsior, and there is a need for public investment, affordable housing development, and resources on par with other neighborhoods.

The Site is Rich in Amenities

6. The site is near to schools, community college, parks, childcare, and the Mission Street and Ocean Avenue commercial districts.
7. The site is immediately adjacent to a major transit node, where BART, Muni streetcars, and local bus service converge.

Affordable Housing is Feasible at the Upper Yard

8. The site (even removing the portion above the BART tunnel) is the right size for an affordable housing development, supporting approximately 100 units of housing.
9. Public agencies already have site control. As a publicly owned site, it provides flexibility that is essential to

facilitating complex development projects.

10. The Upper Yard site's status as a transit oriented development site brings regional support and financing opportunities.

The Site is Underutilized

11. The site has been under utilized for many years, and is currently operating under capacity as a parking lot.

The Project has Broad Political Support

12. The community at large has long been vocal in its desire to minimize the blight of the Upper Yard and see the site creatively re-used.
13. At the community level, numerous neighborhood leaders and community organizations support development of the Upper Yard site. A number of community-based organizations are invested in moving the project forward in partnership with the City.
14. The District Supervisor has expressed his commitment to seeing the site turned into affordable housing. The Mayor of San Francisco has encouraged the community planning process at the site to proceed.



5. Addressing the Challenges: Moving Forward

There are five key issues and challenges that have been identified that the City must address as it moves forward with community development at the Upper Yard site. These include **pedestrian safety, land ownership and operations constraints, funding for affordable housing, community health, and structural constraints.**

Pedestrian Safety

The Balboa Park Station area adjacent to the Upper Yard site is a heavily traveled crossroads where BART, light rail and bus lines converge. Passengers transfer from one system to another, while autos and shuttles are constantly arriving to pick up and drop off passengers. Meanwhile, autos travel at relatively high speeds on the three arterial streets traversing the neighborhood—Geneva, Ocean, and San Jose avenues. Contributing to traffic, and the complex multi-function of the area, are the on and off-ramps for I-280 on Ocean and Geneva avenues directly adjacent to the transit stations. As a result, the station area feels distant from amenities and services that are actually at its doorstep. Pedestrians and bicyclists do their best to navigate through the area to nearby walking and bicycling destinations using inadequate sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle facilities.

The Balboa Park Station Pedestrian and Bicycle Connection Project has proposed a number of solutions to improve pedestrian safety and the overall environment, including pedestrian facilities, bike lanes, bus boarding zones, kiss and ride facilities, etc. In addition, a Citizens Advisory Committee is being set up to monitor implementation and other projects. Development at the site has the potential to greatly reduce pedestrian safety problems, bringing in needed street improvements (wider sidewalks, corner sidewalk extensions, crosswalks) and transforming the corner from an empty car-oriented parking lot into active pedestrian-friendly building frontages.

Land Ownership and Operations Constraints

BART. BART and the SFMTA jointly own and manage the Upper Yard site. BART has built a number of transit-oriented development projects at station ar-



As many opportunities as challenges.
Source: Asian Neighborhood Design.



*"We want to turn these sites into
assets for the neighborhood...
It's all about community
participating and leading the way."*

*~ Jaime Chavarria,
PODER youth leader*

eas throughout the BART system. BART has stated that they are ready to engage in discussions to consider future joint development of the Upper Yard, preferring that both BART and SFMTA portions of the site be developed together. In order to proceed, BART would require further study of the impacts of development on the station substructure below, and would require the relocation of the passenger drop off area and 15 parking spaces for BART operations within the proximate station area. This analysis would suggest alternate locations for passenger drop-off and study their costs, as well as impacts on auto and transit circulation. A new development could incorporate the BART station entry/plaza and a narrower kiss-and-ride drop off lane.

MUNI. The Upper Yard is one of three large pieces of land owned and used by SFMTA in the vicinity of Balboa Park Station. (The other two are the Geneva Yard, where currently all of Muni's historic streetcar fleet is stored and serviced, and the Curtis Green Light Rail Facility, where more than half of Muni's light rail vehicle fleet is stored and serviced.) Development of the Upper Yard with housing would more than likely require MTA to completely abandon the Upper Yard for parking and transit-related uses. Previously, the Upper Yard

was used for overnight storage of light rail vehicles and for staging of M-line trains pulling in and out without having to cross the congested Geneva/San Jose intersection. It is currently being used for employee parking.

The SFMTA has stated that it requires the Upper Yard site for overflow storage of Light Rail Vehicles until 2014 while it completes a rail replacement project for the Curtis Green Light Rail Facility across the street. In the meantime, the SFMTA is undergoing a long-term facilities strategic plan that should assess whether the Upper Yard offers enough operational capacity to justify its retention as an MTA related use. The MTA has stated that it is exploring measures to use the Green and Geneva Yards as efficiently as possible to better meet their future real estate and facilities needs. It would be much harder to justify retaining this site under SFMTA ownership if its ultimate use ends up as "dead storage" or employee parking.

The land transfer and/or ground lease arrangements can be structured to bring maximum benefit to the public agencies that own the site. Based on comparable land sales in the City, the Mayor Office of Housing (MOH) could enter into agreement to purchase the SFMTA parcel. This structure would deliver funds to the SFMTA similar to the land transfer

deal at the nearby project at 1100 Ocean Avenue. For the BART parcel, MOH could provide a capitalized lease payment to BART. This would not purchase the entire BART parcel, but would allow the development to use approximately 7,500 square feet for the project and associated landscaping. BART could use these funds to improve its “kiss and ride” facility and station entrance immediately adjacent to the site.

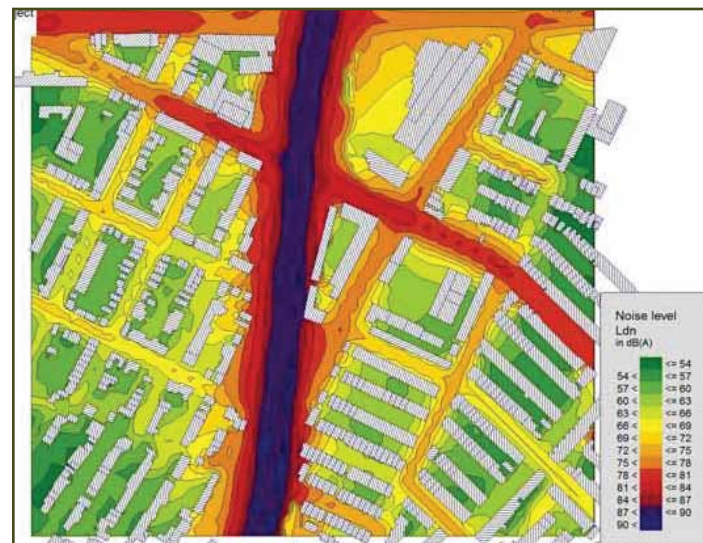
Funding for Affordable Housing

Locally, statewide, and nationally, municipalities are struggling with the lack of funds to develop affordable housing. This challenge is a city-wide issue, affecting the City’s ability to move forward affordable housing development projects on a number of sites. There has been a lot of emphasis in recent months on the need to generate new and sustainable sources of revenues to develop affordable housing. City officials and advocates have been engaged in discussions to place electoral measures on the ballot. These efforts will likely generate resources for affordable housing projects at sites such as the Upper Yard and other opportunity sites within the City.

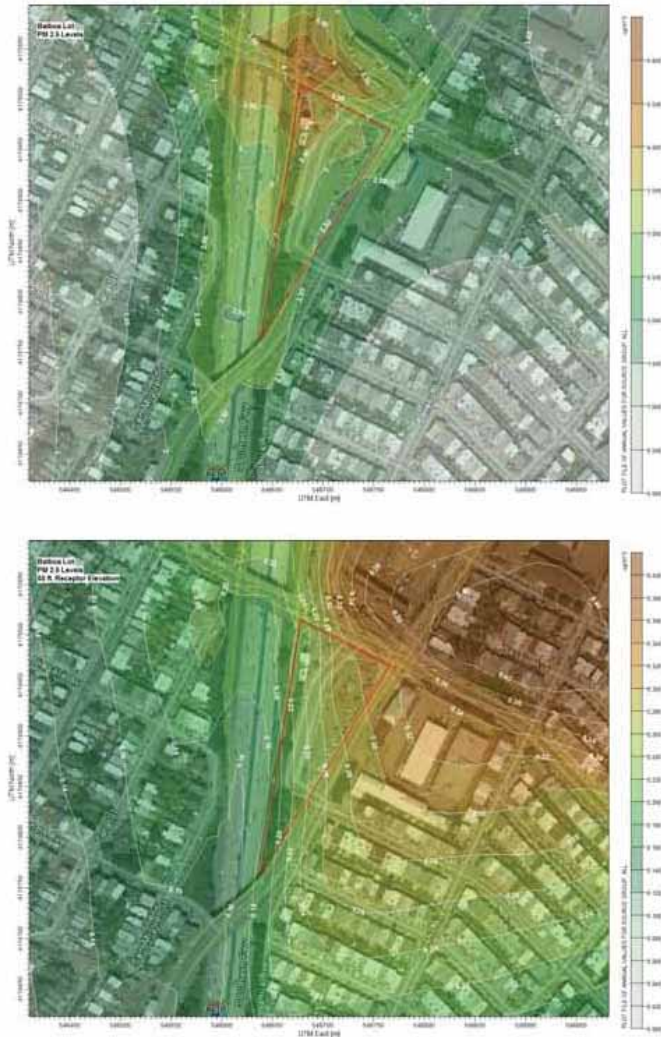
Several financing strategies can be pursued in order to minimize the

local funding burden. First, joint venture opportunities for an anchor tenant on the ground floor could help offset development costs and/or provide a steady stream of revenue to the project as a whole. Partnering with an anchor tenant such as a clinic would reduce the construction burden relative to most commercial uses. Second, innovative construction techniques could be used to build the project at the desired density. Standard concrete construction is both costly and inefficient, but the Pueblo Building Technologies structural steel and light gauge metal stud framing system may be a more efficient and economical alternative. Third, a variety of alternative financing sources at the federal level can be leveraged to help finance the project.

Affordable housing financing sources that are most likely to be available at the time these affordable units are developed would include: 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits, tax-exempt multifamily housing revenue bonds, the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program, local



Noise modeling, showing how courtyards create quiet spaces. Source: SFDPH.



Pollution models and good building design illustrate how to provide clean indoor air.
Source: SFDPH.

subsidy provided by federal HOME funds, inclusionary housing in-lieu fees or Jobs Housing Linkage fees, and possible other non-local sources, such as the State Multifamily Housing Program. In addition, given the Upper Yard’s location within a transit hub, there are potential Transit Oriented Development (TOD) financing opportunities that may be available to supplement other funding, such as the new “Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing” (TOAH) Fund.

Community Health

The Upper Yard site faces environmental challenges that are typical of urban infill development sites. It is located adjacent to busy roadways as well as the 280 freeway, creating exposures to noise and air pollution. Through its planning process, CUHJ has put forward key principles of

“improving environmental conditions and protecting community health.” In order to promote healthy development at the Upper Yard site, PODER reached out to the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH has identified the Upper Yard site as a model to demonstrate healthy development and apply lessons learned in future similar developments nearby high traffic roadways throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Noise. The DPH analysis found that noise levels in the interior of buildings on the site can be controlled by creative acoustical design and compliance with California Building Code acoustical insulation requirements. Exterior noise issues around the site can be managed by using building design to create quiet areas for community use and recreation.

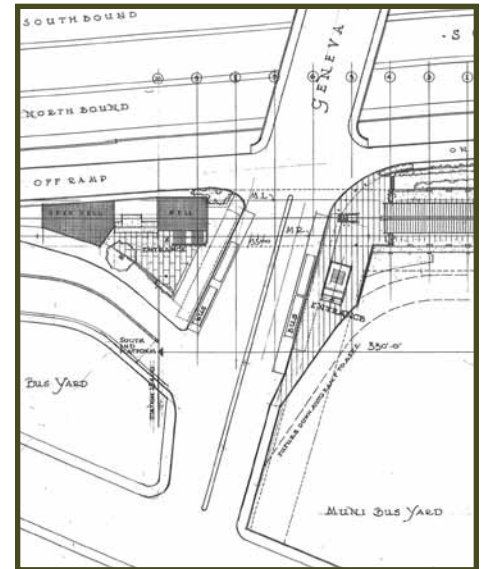
Air Quality. The DPH teamed up with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and researchers at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) to model the environmental factors at the Upper Yard and to explore a variety of policy, design, and scientific interventions for a future affordable housing development project. The BAAQMD hired a graduate student working with Dr. Tina Katopodes Chow of the UCB School of Engineering to specifically apply the latest advances in computer modeling to the Upper Yard.

Initial investigation of the literature on the exposures associated with buildings near freeways indicates that that it may be possible to design the structure in such a fashion that most of the pollutants pass beyond the buildings and nearby courtyards and thereby reduce exposures to new residents. Building orientation, architectural design, strategic location of ventilation intakes, and the design of filtration systems will all provide improved air quality and a healthier environment. On a local level, Article 38 of the San Francisco Health Code will require an analysis of roadway particulate matter exposure. In addition, the Upper Yard can benefit from the health protective design principles recently applied to the Balboa Park planning and redesign process, also adjacent to the freeway, and just one block from the site. Trees could be planted closer to the freeway, creating a thick grove, with a mix of lower-lying vegetation beneath larger-sized trees. According to DPH, “a variety of vegetation types, including different tree species both needled and leaved, are effective in removing toxic fine particles coming from vehicle emissions. The closer the vegetation is to the pollution source, the higher the absorption, and turbulent diffusion rates.”⁶

Structural Constraints

The proximity to the BART tunnel presents various structural constraints, both in terms of costs and attenuating vibration. Building directly over the BART station mezzanine and the BART tube would likely involve greater costs, and would also bring the development up against the freeway. A more likely scenario would avoid building over the tunnel, and instead build either on the edge of the tunnel, as for example the buildings on Mission Street from 15th to 30th Streets (including the Bernal Commons affordable housing development on Mission & Cesar Chavez), or at a slight distance, probably at a 45 degree angle from the bottom of the tunnel’s “area of influence.”

There are a variety of possible configurations for a development on the site and not all of them would necessarily impinge on BART infrastructure. An analysis is required to study a variety of possible physical development configurations and provide preliminary estimates of construction costs for each. BART has extensive experience with joint development given their track record of station joint redevelopment projects throughout the BART system. Our initial concept contemplates retaining a narrower “kiss-and-ride” drive and a landscaped buffer over and adjacent to the BART tunnel,



BART Station plans showing Upper Yard site has adequate footprint for new buildings adjacent to the BART tunnel area. Source: BART.

with the intent of avoiding the structural complexities and cost of building above the tunnel. Further structural analysis is necessary to understand the structural impact and refine the design responses.

No insurmountable challenges!

The Upper Yard site brings many resources and associated challenges; however, none are insurmountable! Each of the unique challenges of the Upper Yard Site can be addressed through partnerships. Strong partnerships will bring together the expertise of public agencies, elected officials, and community leaders to develop a joint action plan to address the community's needs and realize the full potential of the site. Moving forward, we see a real value in the City and community working together, and we hope to join together with public agencies, from the SFMTA and BART, to the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Department of Public Health, the Planning Department, and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

This is an opportunity to lose if we don't start moving forward now. The City must advance through a number of stages in order to develop the Upper Yard site, including land transfer planning, land dedication, model development, financ-

ing, community planning and design. This process is expected to take 3-5 years. Without any assurances that the SFMTA plans to turn over the site for development, it is impossible to access funding opportunities for project pre development planning, acquisition, and development. The MTA has stated that it needs the site until 2014 for temporary staging of light rail vehicles, but this should not preclude the City from accessing funding opportunities and furthering planning, design, and financing scenarios for development. Waiting until 2014 to begin that process would be needless time wasted. Given the lengthy timeline required to complete these steps, there is a need to initiate land transfer agreements as soon as possible.



6. People-Powered Planning Creates A Community Vision

Community Design Workshops

Together with CUHJ, Asian Neighborhood Design facilitated a series of multilingual community design workshops in the fall of 2011. The first, held on August 23, 2011, was a visioning workshop to understand the potential of various opportunity sites throughout the neighborhood. A second, held on September 22, 2011, prepared neighborhood residents to engage in in-depth planning discussions focused on the Upper Yard site. In this workshop, participants used Lego blocks to visualize development on the site, with each colored Lego block representing a particular use, such as a two-bedroom unit, or a ground floor commercial space.

The general vision and understanding of the site became clear through these two workshops: buildings of varying heights, a green buffer along the freeway, plazas and green spaces connected to the BART entry, and a number of community serving uses anchoring the affordable housing development above.

Community Forum

CUHJ organized a neighborhood-wide community design workshop at Balboa High School. The “Foro,” held in October 2011, had over 80 participants in three languages, and included not only local residents, but also representatives from most of the local city agencies involved with the Upper Yard, including

SFMTA, BART, the Department of Public Health, and the Mayor’s Office of Housing. Participants formed small groups made up of young and old, immigrants, men and women, and long time neighborhood residents.

Small group participants began with a rich discussion of what amenities contribute to healthy, vibrant neighborhoods.

Community members responded to five key questions: 1) *what makes a healthy neighborhood?*; 2) *what kinds of amenities appeal to children, teenagers, seniors, and families?*; 3) *what kinds of amenities or activities help build community, or promote collaboration with community organizations?*; 4) *what kinds of amenities can improve your life and promote good health?*; and 5) *how will community based development change our lives?* Based on the



discussions in the small groups, the following elements emerged as a vision for what could be built at the Upper Yard:

Housing Up Above: A strong theme in all four groups was the need to maximize affordable housing. Participants shared the need for a 100% affordable housing project. Many participants felt that housing for families seemed appropriate at the site given the close proximity to transit and schools. Participants created lego models that modeled a project of between four to six stories.

Ground floor: A wide variety of ground floor uses were proposed in the small groups that can be grouped in three categories: neighborhood serving retail, neighborhood based services, and community programming. Proposed retail activities included affordable healthy produce, a café, 24-hour fitness, eateries,

and family entertainment. There was special mention of the need for affordable commercial space to serve local entrepreneurs. Proposed services included a health clinic, a worker center, and child-care. Proposed community programming included a youth hub and/or community center. There was strong interest in wrapping the ground level of the project with storefronts and community programs. With more than 13,000 people passing daily through the station, the frontage along Geneva would have tremendous potential to catch commuter retail, and create incubator spaces for small business entrepreneurs.

Rooftop: All four groups emphasized their desire to create an active rooftop. Rooftop gardens, green house gardens for the production of food, as well as capturing solar energy to power the

building were proposed for the rooftop.

Interior Public spaces: All four groups expressed the need for open spaces to allow for social interaction and recreation. Some examples include interior courtyards that provide safety and comfort for elders, playgrounds, and basketball courts to serve families and children.

Exterior Public spaces: Many rich ideas for exterior public spaces were proposed in the four groups, ranging from a corner plaza to welcoming entries from both the San Jose and Geneva Avenue sides. Farmer's Markets were proposed in addition to green spaces with seating, plants, and trees.

Street Design. The need to create a safe, pedestrian friendly environment was emphasized throughout the room. Participants spoke to the need for wide



sidewalks, clearly marked crosswalks, adequate space and comfort for transit riders waiting at bus stops, as well as a safe drop off solution.

Greenery: There was wide consensus on the need to green the space with a wide variety of vegetation. Green buffers in the form of tall, bushy trees were proposed as natural barriers along the freeway to absorb pollution and reduce noise. People-scale fruit trees were proposed along San Jose and Geneva. Greenery, flowering plants, and shady trees were recommended for all public spaces and plazas.

Building Design: The four breakout groups all suggested a collection of buildings instead of one large building. Participants were eager to incorporate the health protective designs proposed by the Department of Public Health, as

well as sound proofing features. Given the proximity to transit, most participants were interested in reducing the domination of cars and learning from how other successful facilities have reduced car use by including car share programs. Participants also expressed a desire to link architecturally to the adjacent Geneva Car Barn.

A Neighborhood Clinic. One of the recurring themes was the critical need for expanded health services and a potential health clinic on the ground floor. Coincidentally, the Excelsior Clinic operated by Mission Neighborhood Health Centers is exploring expansion of its facilities and services in the Excelsior District. They envision approximately 8,500 sq ft medical, behavioral health, health education, and ancillary services, such as laboratory and x-rays, ample

patient registration area, and a wellness activities room that could be shared with resident community spaces.

Home is Where the Heart Is

Our community planning and city engagement project culminated in “Home is Where the Heart Is,” a multilingual Town Hall meeting with over 100 grassroots community planners, city representatives, and neighborhood groups, where we presented the outcomes of our planning project back to the larger community and developed Valentine’s Day Letters for Mayor Ed Lee and MTA Director Ed Reiskin to “show us their love” for our community vision for affordable housing at the Upper Yard.



People-Powered Planning Creates a Community Vision

Where today there is a parking lot, concrete and asphalt, we envision buildings of varying heights lining Geneva and San Jose Avenue, restoring a sense of vitality, neighborhood connection, and vibrancy to the transit station area. Affordable housing, serving the critical need for youth, seniors, and families in the neighborhood, would fill the upper floors, up to four stories on the south end along San Jose, facing the neighborhood, and up to six stories on Geneva facing the BART station. The homes would be financed to serve low and moderate-income community members, which is roughly equivalent to the levels that the city's affordable housing programs generally fund. The apartments would mostly face inner courtyards and San Jose Avenue, turning away from the noise and pollution of the freeway.

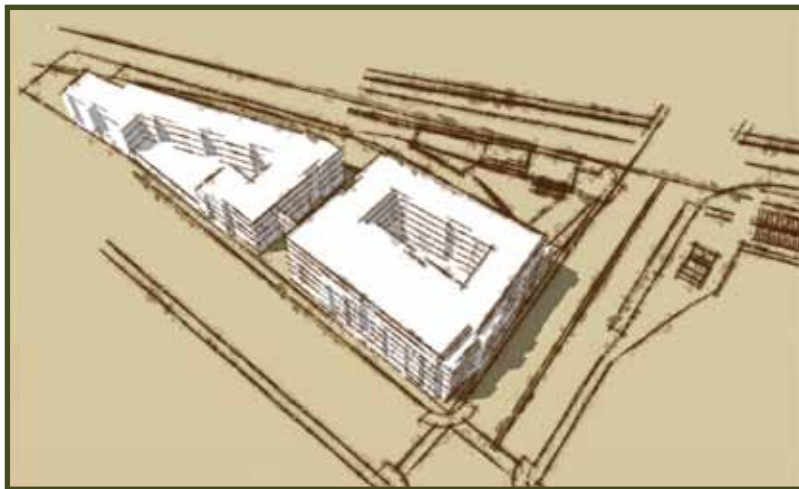
A forest of trees planted along the freeway would shield the development, and vents from the upper floors would provide fresh air to all the units. The landscaped windbreaks, building and roofs would be carefully sculpted to disperse the freeway air currents up and away from the building. The roof would be covered with solar panels, to provide



hot water and electricity for all the building's common uses.

At the street level, a green tree-lined plaza at the west side of Geneva would invite community members and commuters alike to the new community-serving uses, the BART entry, and a new walk and kiss-and-ride pathway, which on weekends will serve for cultural events, farmer's markets, and celebrations. At the ground floor of the new buildings, facing Geneva and San Jose, would be a new 8,000 square foot state-of-the-art neighborhood health clinic, the development's first major tenant, providing a range of services, as well as smaller uses, from possibly a café, small grocery store, or

worker center. The building design would complement historic details and planned renovation of the Geneva Car Barn across the street. This would be largely a transit oriented development, but spaces would be provided for car-share vehicles, the clinic, as well as bicycles. At the interior of the building, two quiet second-floor courtyards provide a respite of green space, community gardens, and playgrounds for the building's tenants.



Based on the community's design ideas and technical analysis, AND developed an initial design study for family housing at the Upper Yard with two adjacent buildings.

Next to the BART station to the north, would be a 65' building with with five stories of housing (80 units) wrapping around a central courtyard. The building is made up of a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, with the 30% three-bedroom units required for TCAC family housing funding. The ground floor is approximatley 20,000 square feet, which allows an 8,000 s.f. clinic, small retail spaces at the corners, and community spaces for residents. While the zoning allows an 85' building, this design proposes a more modest building, stepping back slightly at the top floor, though more units could be accomodated with a project built to the maximum allowable envelope.

To the south would be a lower 40' building, with three stories (33 units) of housing above a 15,000 square foot ground floor, which would provide a small amount of parking and business incubator spaces. In this preliminary design, we show more one-bedroom units, which could house seniors or transitional-age young people. The two buildings would be connected with a bridge over a pedestrian walkway to the BART plaza.

Building A

Unit	Typ. Size	Number	%
1-BR	550 s.f.	30	37.5%
2-BR	800 s.f.	25	31.25%
3-BR	1,050 s.f.	25	31.25%
Total		80 units	

Building B

Unit	Typ. Size	Number	%
1-BR	550 s.f.	18	54.5%
2-BR	800 s.f.	9	27.3%
3-BR	1,050 s.f.	6	18.2%
Total		33 units	



7. Make it Happen! Action Plan & Next Steps

“Affordable housing is important here in the Excelsior... I am so glad to hear you are involved in community planning... that’s what I feel is the hope of San Francisco... the community plans its future... then City Hall should listen... the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor should work together, and act on your wishes.”

~ Mayor Edwin Lee, addressing Excelsior community members, February 13, 2012



We hope this document will demonstrate the range of community support and consensus around an affordable housing and community development project at the Upper Yard site that began with the Balboa Park Station Area Plan and has continued with the community planning process led by PODER, the Filipino Community Center, and Coleman Advocates. Embedded in these pages is a vision that addresses the challenges and complexities of the site, as well as the incredible opportunities.

Four prominent themes emerged from our research and the visioning process shared by community members during our workshops:

1. The Upper Yard site is a critical priority for development due to its public ownership, underutilization, location, size and zoning that make it ripe for affordable housing development;
2. The challenges posed by noise, air pollution, and the BART tunnel structure, can all be overcome with appropriate design and without incurring significant costs;
3. By its location at a transit node, the site can be a focal point for transit-oriented and “sustainable communities” funding in the city and region, and the challenges posed by affordable housing financing can be overcome by identifying sites such as these that will help garner community support for a city housing trust fund; and
4. There is wide community support and consensus for a mixed-use affordable housing development on this site. Addressing the critical need for housing in the neighborhood will enable future generations to continue to be part of this incredible community.

Consensus. The first step, developing a community vision and consensus, has been taken. We believe the work of CUHJ in convening with city partners and community stakeholders points to the clear potential of this site as a priority for affordable housing. By uniting together to conduct a community planning process around the Upper Yard site with District 11’s diverse communities, the Filipino Community Center, Coleman Advocates, and PODER, in collaboration with AND, have developed a vision and consensus for future development that grows out of the hopes and aspirations of District 11’s low-income residents. Community members offered solutions and new perspectives on how to look at development that is truly people-powered: that is, that puts

people in the lead of a partnership that brings investment and resources to the community, and which, by addressing the City's critical need for affordable housing for all, ultimately benefits the City as a whole.

At a recent community event organized by CUHJ in District 11, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee stated that when communities come together to engage in real grassroots planning, City Hall should take the time to listen. We believe that this is such a moment. The opportunity exists to create genuine partnerships and to combine community-based leadership with political leadership from our elected officials and city institutions. Our community looks forward to working with the Mayor, the District Supervisor, and city agencies to make this a reality.

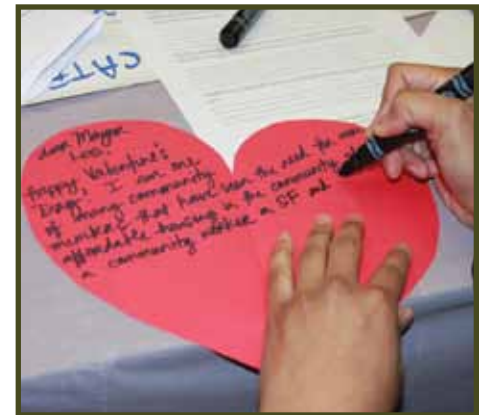
Addressing Technical Challenges.

The vision presented in this report shows that the technical challenges can be overcome. SFDPH has chosen this as a model infill site to identify appropriate mitigations that can be implemented in order to mitigate for air quality issues near the freeway.

Funding the housing. Funding is another issue, and we commit ourselves to joining this vision with work for local funding sources for affordable housing. We look forward to working with MOH and other agencies to advocate for

affordable housing options and financing sources (such as a TOAH fund project), and look forward to finding pre-development funds to provide construction cost estimates and mitigation measures, as well as further refined schematic designs to protect the site from pollution.

Land Disposition. The long-term challenges of finding funding for new construction should not stop us from beginning the immediate work of assembling the land from the various public agencies. The next step is to develop a land disposition agreement to transfer the two parcels that make up the site from MTA and BART to MOH, and to guarantee that the Upper Yard is made available for affordable housing. We wait for clear direction from BART and MTA to dedicate the air rights parcel to MOH. In our initial design concept, the entire MTA parcel, and a small portion of the BART parcel, would be transferred to MOH. The parcels will first need to undergo an appraisal process, similar to what was done recently with two other publicly-owned sites (the Phelan Loop property and 17th & Folsom), which could begin immediately. This does not mean that MTA would have to vacate immediately, but rather that the necessary steps would begin to be taken (in terms of site control) to begin financing a development.



Heartfelt messages express the need for affordable housing at the Upper Yard.

Action Plan / Next Steps!

The community has been leading the way. Transforming vision into a reality requires the City to step forward as strong partners with our communities to complete the following steps: a.) develop the vision, b.) convene stakeholders and research challenges and opportunities, c.) build community consensus and support, d.) begin land dedication, e.) engage development partners and develop financing plan, e.) build it, and f.) move in! We have been actively engaged in the first three; now is the time to begin serious conversations with the public agencies that own the land around a firm road map for dedicating the land for the community's vision.

Begin Land Dedication (July – December 2012)

- ❖ Mayor's Office to dedicate a lead staff person to coordinate efforts
- ❖ Land dedication would not mean that the MTA would have to vacate immediately, but rather that the necessary steps would begin to be taken (in terms of site control) to begin financing a development.
- ❖ MOH, SFMTA, BART and the SF Community Land Trust to develop land transfer, land swap and/or

ground lease scenarios in order to execute a land disposition agreement to transfer the Upper Yard parcels from BART and MTA to the Mayor's Office of Housing

Engage Development Partners & Develop Financing Plan (January – June 2013)

- ❖ The City identifies pre development funds to provide construction cost estimates and mitigation measures
- ❖ The community and city officials advocate for a Housing Trust Fund and other financing sources to address the City's critical need for affordable housing and provide funding options for Upper Yard site
- ❖ The City oversees a process to partner with community based development team that could include any combination of affordable housing developers and community land trust.

Build It

- ❖ City ensures that development and construction adhere to local hire and first source commitments in order to maximize employment opportunities for neighborhood residents.

Endnotes

- 1 San Francisco Socio-Economic Profile, San Francisco Planning Department, May 2011
- 2 available at: <http://www.sfbos.org/index.aspx?page=1224>
- 3 For comparison, the Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH) considers a one-person household with an income of \$28,850 to be 40% of San Francisco's "Area Median Income," which is in the range served by MOH's low-income affordable housing programs. Source: MOH web site.
- 4 Based on data provided by San Francisco Planning Department
- 5 "What Kind of Neighborhood Do We Want?" Health Impact Analysis conducted by PODER and SF Department of Public Health.
- 6 DPH, Balboa Park Air Quality report, Draft: August 28, 2009



Every Neighborhood Has a Soul!

Community Responses in Design Workshops

1. What makes a healthy neighborhood?

- ✧ Cultural vibrancy
- ✧ Socio economic diversity
- ✧ People treating their neighbors right
- ✧ A sense of community
- ✧ Where people can be safe and not have to worry
- ✧ Good neighbors
- ✧ Everyone is approachable and friendly
- ✧ Unity
- ✧ Somewhere kids can find a place to hang out
- ✧ Resident controlled affordable housing
- ✧ Affordable housing
- ✧ Equity, social justice, genuine democracy
- ✧ Jobs or access to them
- ✧ Healthy amenities
- ✧ Health clinics
- ✧ Resources
- ✧ Clean air
- ✧ Access to fresh & affordable food
- ✧ Easy access to open green public space
- ✧ Many plants and trees

2. What kinds of amenities or activities help to build community, to meet your neighbors, or promote collaboration with community organizations?

- ✧ Public spaces

- ✧ Parks, trees, benches, mini parks
- ✧ Stores
- ✧ Affordable food market
- ✧ Playground
- ✧ Clinic
- ✧ Childcare
- ✧ Job training

3. What kinds of amenities appeal to children, teenagers, seniors, and families?

- ✧ Safe Streets
- ✧ Community spaces
- ✧ Childcare
- ✧ Youth Center
- ✧ Senior center
- ✧ Library
- ✧ Health clinic
- ✧ Credit union or community bank
- ✧ Grocery store
- ✧ Café
- ✧ Laundry
- ✧ Car share & parking

4. What kinds of amenities can improve your life and promote good health?

- ✧ Good neighbors
- ✧ Good environment
- ✧ Healthy, affordable food
- ✧ Grocery store
- ✧ Public artwork

- ✧ “Hang out” space and café (while waiting for public transportation)
- ✧ Well-designed streets (rework Geneva and San Jose for pedestrian safety)
- ✧ Neighborhood clinic
- ✧ Greenway (with low-maintenance native plants)
- ✧ Skate park (at Ocean and San Jose)

5. How will community-based development change our lives?

- ✧ Build community by getting to know more people in the neighborhood
- ✧ Build communities’ faith and trust that positive change can occur
- ✧ Unite our communities
- ✧ Incorporate our cultures
- ✧ Increase participation in our communities
- ✧ Include our communities in governing and taking care of neighborhood spaces
- ✧ Expand community ownership
- ✧ Affordable housing will enable people to stay and not get pushed out
- ✧ Affordable housing improves economic conditions for families
- ✧ Improve our health
- ✧ Reduce violence in our neighborhoods, more activities for youth means less likely to join gangs
- ✧ Expand public, open, green, and recreational space



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