

1999 Rudy Bruner Award

GOLD
medal winner



YERBA BUENA GARDENS

San Francisco, California

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URBAN EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY

BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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with

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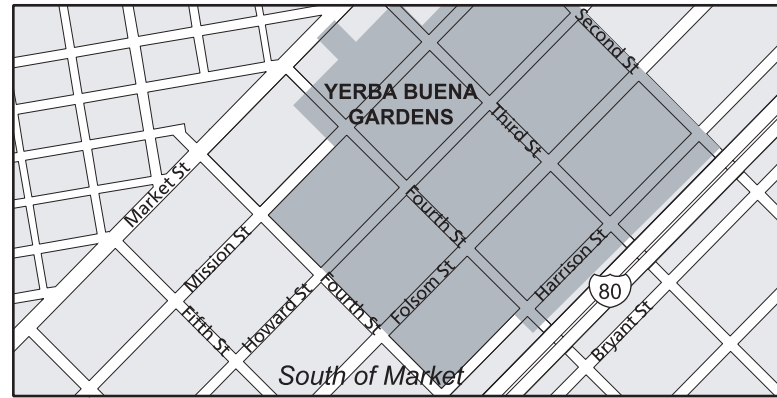
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Yerba Buena Gardens



YERBA BUENA GARDENS AT A GLANCE

WHO MADE THE SUBMISSION?

- San Francisco Redevelopment Agency,
Helen L. Sause, Deputy Executive Director.

WHAT IS YERBA BUENA GARDENS?

- Yerba Buena Gardens is an 87-acre urban redevelopment project in the South of Market (SOMA) district of San Francisco that includes a mixture of housing, open space, cultural facilities, children’s facilities, a convention center, and commercial development.

Arts and Urban Amenities

- A world-class cultural community comprising more than two dozen museums and galleries, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA), a Center for the Arts (CFA) complex, a Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and a youth-oriented arts facility, “Zeum.”
- A 10-acre complex of children’s facilities including an ice skating rink and a bowling alley, a youth-oriented cultural center, an open space amphitheater and play/learning garden, and a 90-space child care center.
- A well-used cultural and artistic public space for SOMA locals and other San Franciscans centered around nearly six acres of public gardens.

Economic Development

- A wide range of rental and condominium residential facilities, including complexes for low-income seniors and working poor as well as market-rate units.
- A convention center supported by a mixture of hotels, commercial, and entertainment facilities.
- A highly popular destination for tourists from around the country and the world.
- Three high-rise office buildings.

Community Development and Social Justice

- A series of public-private partnerships that have reclaimed a neighborhood from the displacement caused by the “bulldozer” planning of 1950s and 1960s urban renewal.
- A network of stakeholder organizations that manage and sustain the project through continuous negotiation within and among different constituencies.

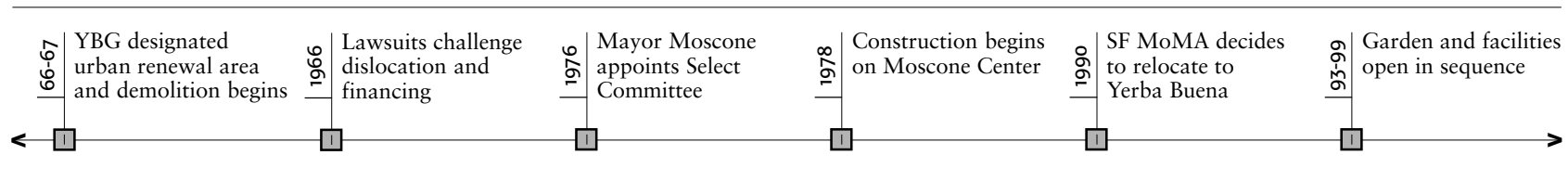
CHRONOLOGY

First Stage

- 1953
19.5 blocks in the South of Market area designated as a study area for redevelopment.
- 1953-1961
Redevelopment area shifted, becoming smaller (87 acres) and moving closer to Market Street. Design theme of convention center and sports-related facilities chosen.
- 1964
Livingston / Blayne and John Carl Warnecke produce preliminary concept and design plan, named Yerba Buena Gardens, for a “protected environment.”
- 1966-1967
Yerba Buena Center officially designated an urban renewal area. In 1967 The Redevelopment Agency initiated demolition.
- 1967-1969
Kenzo Tange and then Gerald M. McCue and Associates chosen to produce the first plan for central blocks, based on the Livingston / Blayne and Warnecke concept. Request for developer proposals results in choice of Schlesinger/Arcon-Pacific.
- 1969-1975
Various lawsuits challenge dislocation, financing, and environmental concerns, including the successful 1970-1973 Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment (TOOR) suit over the relocation process. Development was halted.

Second Stage

- 1976
Mayor Moscone appoints Select Committee to conduct public hearings and produce a consensus plan for central blocks. Resulting concept includes a public garden, subsidized housing, preservation of key historic buildings, and an underground convention center.
- 1978
Construction begins on Moscone Convention Center.
- 1980
Request for developer qualifications results in selection of Olympia & York. RFQ specifies land and financial exactions for public gardens and cultural institutions (Center for the Arts).
- 1981
The second master plan, Olympia & York’s “Esplanade Plan,” is selected.
- 1982
Moscone Center opens.
- 1984
Development and Disposition agreement reached with Olympia & York.
- 1985
James Stewart Polshek and Fumihiko Maki selected to design arts facilities.



1986-1989

Marriott Hotel is constructed.

1989

Moscone Convention Center's two-part expansion under Central Block 2 and one-third of Central Block 3 begins.

1992

Olympia & York faces economic difficulties and is removed as lead developer.

Third Stage

1987-1990

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art decides to relocate to Yerba Buena.

1991

Yerba Buena Alliance formed. Central children's area, including ice rink, Childcare Center, and Zeum, planned.

1993

Gardens and Center for the Arts open. Moscone expansion completed.

1995

SFMoMA opens.

1998

Children's facilities open.

1999

Sony's Metreon opens.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

Individuals who were interviewed are marked with an asterisk [*]

City of San Francisco

Mayoral Administrations

Joseph Alioto (1967-1975)

George Moscone (1975-1978)

Dianne Feinstein (1978-1987)

Art Agnos (1987-1991)

Frank Jordan (1991-1995)

Willie Brown (1995-present)

San Francisco Board of Supervisors

* Supervisor Susan Bierman

Department of City Planning

Alan Jacobs, Former Director

* Hillary Gittleman, Major Projects

San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and Commission

* Helen Sause, Deputy Director and Project Director, Yerba Buena Gardens (1980-1997)

* Ed Ong, Chief Architect

* David Collins, former Project Director for Yerba Buena Gardens

* John Henry Kouba, SF Redevelopment Commissioner and Commission President

* Clifford Graves, former Executive Director

* William Carney, Project Director for Yerba Buena Gardens

Local Community and Nonprofit Groups

- * John Marks, President, San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau
- * Friends of the Garden
- * TOOR (Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment)
- * John Elberling, Chairperson of the Consortium and Executive Vice President of TODCO (Tenants and Owners Development Corporation) and the Yerba Buena Consortium.
- * Monsignor Fred Bitanga, Minister, St. Patrick's Cathedral
- * Anita Hill, Executive Director; Matthew Witte, Chairman, Yerba Buena Alliance
- * Mary McCue, General Manager, KTB Realty Partners
- * Jeanne Nelson, President, Child Care Choices

Developers

- * Mike Farrar, Millennium Partnership and Paula Collins, WDG Ventures (Sony Corporation's Metreon and the Market Street Four Season's Hotel)
- * Jeffrey Snyder, Carpenter & Company and the Related Companies of California (3rd and Mission parcel developers)
- * Hampshire, LLC (W Hotel at 3rd and Howard)
- * Marriott Corporation

Architects

Kenzo Tange and Gerald McCue, architects of the first redevelopment plans

Ziedler Roberts Partnership, Willis Associates, Lawrence Halprin, Omi Lang, architects of the Olympia & York era master plan

James Stewart Polshek, Architect for the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Fumihiko Maki, Architect for the Center for the Arts Galleries & Forum

Mitchell Giurgola, Mallas & Foote, Omi Lang, Paul Friedberg, and Hargreaves Associates, designers of Garden / Esplanade

Mario Botta, Architect for San Francisco Museum of Art

* Cathy Simon, Principal, Simon Martin / Vegue Winkelstein Moris, architects for the Metreon

* Adele Santos, Adele Santos Architects, architects for the children's facilities

Pei, Cobb, Freed and Partners, architects of original 3rd and Mission office complex (redesigned as residential luxury apartments by Elkus, Manfredi Associates)

Arts Community

- * William Osterhaus, Chair, Yerba Buena Policy Advisory Committee and Zeum Board Member
- * Lori Fogarty, Senior Deputy Director and the new Director of Zeum
- * John Killacky, Executive Director; Mario Garcia Durham, Performing Arts Curator, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- * Mike McCone, Executive Director, California Historical Society

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

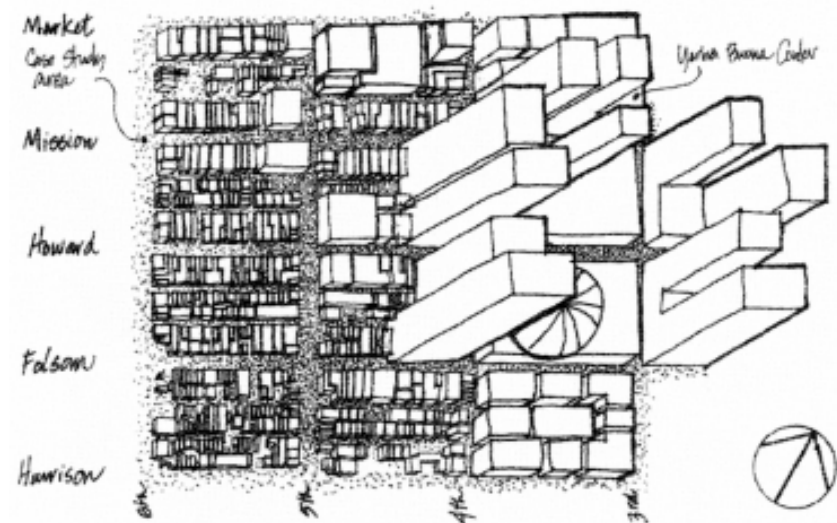
HISTORY

After a brief stint as a gold prospectors' camp in the mid-19th century, San Francisco's South of Market area evolved after the Civil War into an important service sector, geared largely to the city's port. Young, single, and often immigrant dock workers and merchant seamen formed a majority of the population, and industrial infrastructure and workers' housing came to dominate the landscape. As early as 1870, almost one-third of San Francisco's boarding houses and half of its lodging houses were located South of Market. The area's distinctive demographic pattern grew more pronounced over the following decades, reaching a peak when war workers flooded into the port during the 1940s. Building codes and aesthetic standards fell by the wayside as housing the massive influx of workers took first priority; temporary shelters and illegally subdivided apartments became the order of the day, dominating the South of Market area.

Needless to say, such developments did nothing to endear this working-class neighborhood to the city's elite, especially amidst the heady optimism of the postwar housing boom and urban renewal.

In 1953, 19.5 blocks South of Market were designated a redevelopment zone by one of the nation's first redevelopment agencies. The area's fate was sealed in 1961, when changes in

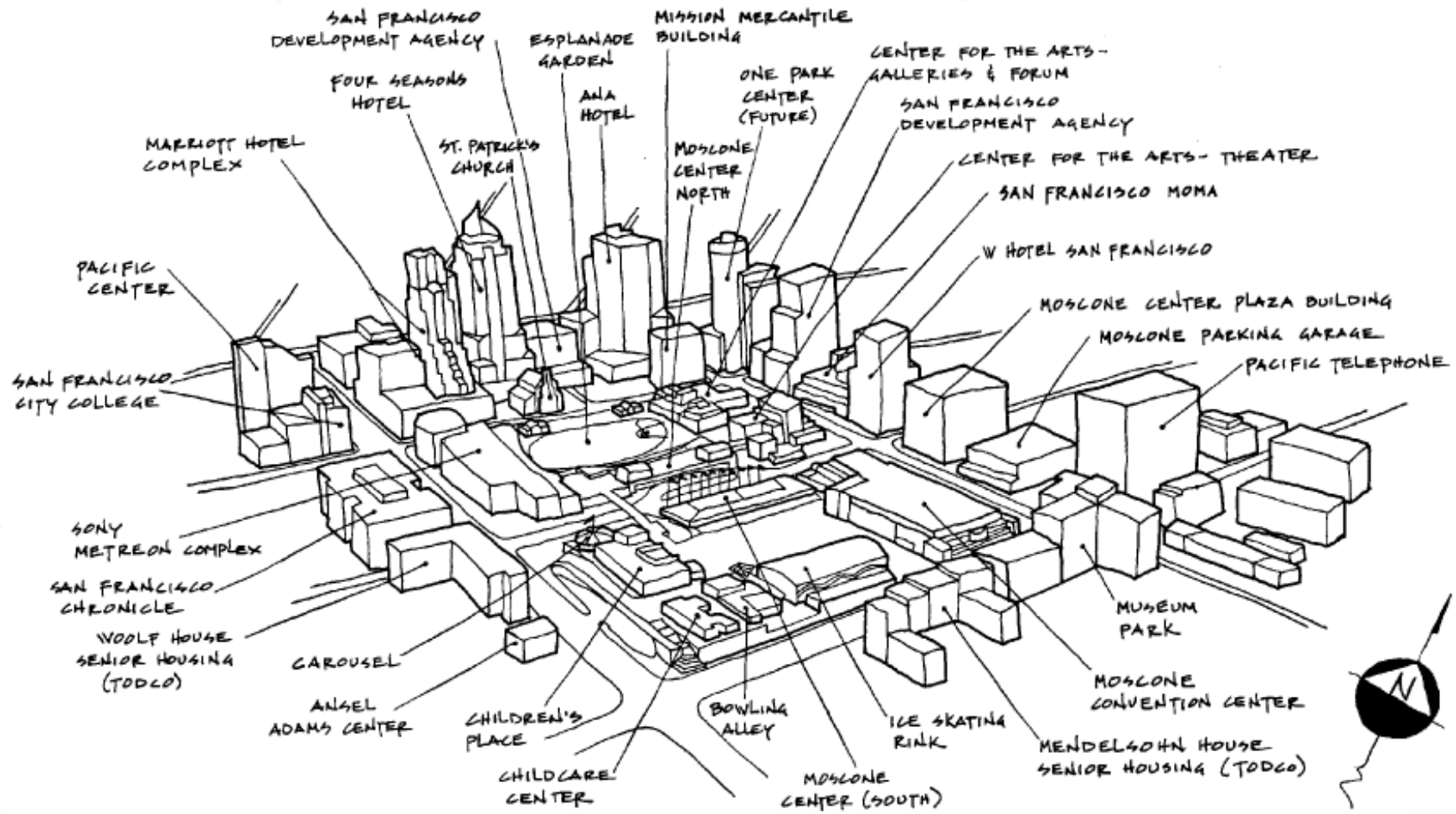
container technology shifted port activity to Oakland and deprived the neighborhood of its livelihood. By this time, city planners had begun to see the South of Market area as a promising adjunct to the financial district; the redevelopment zone accordingly migrated east and north toward Market Street, shrinking by nearly 10 blocks



Early conceptions of Yerba Buena Gardens, (see for later scheme see p.16), envisioned a complex of high rise buildings in almost a fortress fashion. (Drawing reprinted by *Places* from Cheryl Parker's "Making a 21st-Century Neighborhood," vol 10 #1, 1995)

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The diverse mix of land uses adds to the richness of the current Yerba Buena Complex.

along the way. For the next decade, conceptualizations of “Yerba Buena Center” featured large-scale commercial development – convention center, sports arena, theaters, a museum, office buildings, and retail – designed to promote gentrification of the surrounding areas.

These visions, however, ignored one crucial fact: approximately 4,000 people already lived in the South of Market area. To make room for Yerba Buena Center, their homes would have to be demolished. These residents, nearly all of them single, elderly, male, and poor, eked out a living on small pensions and Social Security; they seemed to have little defense against the federal bulldozer. According to historian Chester Hartman, a loose network of land-hungry planners, newspapers, and city officials used the area’s poverty to depict it as a dangerous “Skid Row” ripe for redevelopment, populated by “bums” and “transients” whose fate mattered little. Like its cousins in other American cities, San Francisco’s Redevelopment Agency acted with relative disregard for the local residents: it initiated mass dislocations, while planning only 276 units of new housing to replace the thousands of lost units.

After the demolitions, the grandiose redevelopment plan stalled. Indeed, little was accomplished under its auspices beyond the razing of several still-vibrant blocks South of Market. By the time construction was to have begun in the late 1960s, several factors had critically undermined the plan. Changes in corporate structure had shrunk the market for massive-footprint buildings; the Nixon Administration had weakened urban redevelopment agencies; and,

perhaps most importantly, citizen resistance had grown in intensity and sophistication. Crucial in this last regard was a 1970 lawsuit filed by Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment (TOOR). This group of low-income and elderly residents charged that the Redevelopment Agency had not met its legal obligation to provide housing for displaced residents. The settlement of the lawsuit forced the Agency to seriously re-evaluate its plans, and gave birth to Tenants and Owners Development Corporation (TODCO, a nonprofit housing developer). The lawsuit and citizen pressure forced the Redevelopment Agency into a new mode of planning, based on collaboration with neighborhood residents. The Agency’s vision for the neighborhood – and its legally adopted and funded plans – now had to be rethought, and be achieved through negotiations, not by fiat.

Even after TOOR’s success, the situation South of Market had hardly been resolved. As in many other American (and international) cities, urban renewal had left an ugly legacy. However, in San Francisco key lessons had been learned from the bitter legal battles, and when interest in redevelopment again picked up, it proceeded along very different lines. In 1976 San Francisco Mayor George Moscone appointed a Select Committee to study the area and produce a consensus design vision, explicitly encouraging citizen input through public hearings and discussions. This committee affirmed what were to be the most enduring elements of the project: the commitment to subsidized low-income housing (1,500 relocation rooms, plus 4 lots for TODCO to build new affordable housing); the goal of mixing a variety of commercial uses

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and public facilities; and, importantly, the idea of locating the convention center expansion underground and covering it with a public garden and other amenities. When the Redevelopment Agency sent out its request for qualifications, it emphasized another crucial aspect: it required developers to set aside land and funds for cultural institutions such as museums, exhibits, and theaters. In 1981, the Agency chose developer Olympia & York. All the elements of the modern Yerba Buena appeared to be in place.

Nothing in this project, however, was fated to be easy. Olympia & York suffered a long and painful decline over the next decade, finally concluding it could not proceed in 1990. Although the Marriott Hotel had already been completed by then, few of the developer's other plans were ever implemented. As it had with the lawsuit, however, the Redevelopment Agency turned this obstacle into an opportunity. Rather than seeking yet another single developer, it began to devise strategies for smaller scale developments within the project area that, in the end, were far more responsive to local conditions and needs than any one overarching template could have been. Still committed to the mixed use of retail, convention center, cultural institutions, low-income housing, and open space, the Agency shrewdly negotiated financial and design exactions from developers. These resources, combined with hotel taxes and the \$34 million Olympia & York paid to buy out of its obligations, provided a foundation for the diversity of programs and uses that currently makes up Yerba Buena Gardens.

VISION

Since the convening of Mayor Moscone's Select Committee, the guiding vision for Yerba Buena has been that of a genuine neighborhood: a diverse mixture of different uses and constituencies co-existing in a new downtown community. The different constituencies – the arts community, the retail and commercial development, the convention center and tourist trade, and the housing needs of the lower income community – have been in bitter conflict at various times in the project's history, and have threatened to make development impossible. It was only when the Agency incorporated them into a single vision that Yerba Buena's greatest strength emerged: since power was distributed among the neighborhood's various constituencies, no single voice was able to dominate the process. With no one player able to achieve total control, development was forced to attend to the needs of all players. The result has been a balance of interests rather than a one-dimensional – and ultimately fragile – approach.

Balancing the diverse interests represented in the emerging neighborhood has resulted in development choices based on a broader vision than "highest and best use" for each particular plot of land, creating a complex layering of seemingly incompatible elements. The open spaces of the Esplanade Garden and the extensive areas devoted to child care and other youth amenities, chosen over more profitable commercial development, testify to the Agency's faith that Yerba Buena as a whole would be greater than the sum of its parts. The low-income housing, which might easily have continued to be a source of friction and resentment, instead

became a centerpiece of the Agency’s continuing commitment to inclusiveness. In particular, the Bruner Selection Committee was impressed by the efforts to include San Francisco youths. At a time when other urban entertainment districts and major urban redevelopment projects are discouraging youth from “hanging out,” Yerba Buena actively invites them in. Bowling alleys, skating rinks, teen-oriented cultural facilities and creative electronic programming for older youth at Zeum are all there at a time when urban economics (especially San Francisco’s) could easily have allowed for more profitable construction.

The inclusion of youth points to a more general commitment that Yerba Buena’s cultural and commercial institutions be part of local as well as tourist life. The development was not intended to be a precious “cultural precinct” separate from the rest of San Francisco. Instead, the goal has been to integrate the project into the city, both architecturally and programmatically. Thus it is designed to be permeable at the edges (see “Urban Context” below), and the facilities are open to local use. Local residents are encouraged to put up shows at the Center for the Arts; fully one-third of the child care center spots are reserved for low-income neighborhood residents (with another third reserved for neighborhood businesses); and community folk often join the audiences of the many cultural events. Yerba Buena has seen the building of low-income housing, low-return childcare centers, and precious acres devoted to open public space at a time when other cities are focusing narrowly on visitors and tourist traffic. Ultimately, such decisions emanate from the vision of a genuine neighborhood, a place that gains value not

only through tourist dollars but also from the opportunities and relationships it fosters for its own residents.

While remaining committed to this idealistic vision, the Agency did not ignore the bottom line economics or the aesthetics of the project. They ensured a healthy commercial life with diverse retail and entertainment venues, and selected internationally known architects to design a stylistic showcase of cultural and entertainment facilities. Their vision had always recognized the economic potential of the South of Market Area, and the introduction of social justice agendas after the lawsuits did not change that essential fact. Indeed, some of the most innovative aspects of the Agency’s approach has been its ability to harness social justice goals to the engine of the neighborhood’s profit potential in a variety of creative ways (see “Financing” below). This can be understood as having respect for what is actually present in a place rather than selecting or ignoring existing elements to suit a preconceived notion of what should be there. Simply because of location, among other factors, the potential for commercial development could no more be ignored or denied than the low-income population who so stubbornly refused to exit quietly. Both were elements of the neighborhood as it already existed, and plans for Yerba Buena were stymied until the inclusion of both became the Agency’s vision.

ORGANIZATION/LEADERSHIP

At first glance, the story of Yerba Buena might appear to be about top-down leadership: the Redevelopment Agency, backed by land ownership, government power, and government money, learning

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through blunders and accomplishments on its way to ultimate success. The Selection Committee, however, found this appearance misleading. Certainly the project has been managed by top-down leadership, both to its benefit and detriment, but that leadership has been consistently shaped and modified by the local community. Faced with the common problem of recovering from the slash-and-burn urban redevelopment style of the 1950s and early 1960s, a diversity of stakeholders came together, sometimes combatively, in a process that eventually spoke to everyone’s needs. Many extremely powerful players came to the table, but no single force dominated. Ultimately, the project’s leadership would not be limited to City government, since many crucial elements of the plan originated in citizen pressure or the private sector.



Helen Sause of the San Francisco Redevelopment Authority.

The Redevelopment Agency

The main engine of Yerba Buena’s development has always been the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, which has managed the project for nearly four decades. Perhaps the single most important trait of the Agency has been its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, taking advantage of seemingly fatal obstacles to devise new and better strategies. In effect, the Agency has reacted to a series of legal and economic challenges by incorporating them into a broader and more diversified vision of Yerba Buena. The citizens’ lawsuits, for example, taught the immensely powerful Agency that it could not ignore the people directly affected by its projects. The Agency was able to capitalize on its “defeat” and incorporate low-income residents and their housing into a new design concept. Later, the slow demise of Olympia & York weaned the Agency from its reliance on single-vision developers, introducing it to the crucial skills of piece-by-piece negotiation. In the long term, this produced a more responsive and participatory design process.

The site visit team was impressed that what could have been a story of frustrations, obstacles, and ultimate failure became instead a story of a vision shaped and tempered through difficult but ultimately fruitful interactions. The Selection Committee also recognized the strength of the project’s episodic evolution, affirming that the process had been influenced by conflict over the years in positive ways – that conflict, in other words, had actually added value. The Committee saw evidence of *learning from*, not just *surviving*, this conflict in the wide variety of participants who say they are proud of the project. Everyone involved feels responsible

(and wants to feel responsible) for what Yerba Buena has become. Since conflict will always be a part of urban settings, using it as a resource in this way instead of an obstacle is an important strategy. The Committee noted that credit is particularly due to the stewardship of Helen Sause, the deputy director of the Redevelopment Agency, for her skill at maintaining or rebuilding shattered relationships through this difficult process.

The Agency has repeatedly employed two innovative strategies since the 1976 Select Committee. The first was to wrest financial and design exactions from potential developers to maintain the project's funding and negotiated design priorities. Thus, for example, the lease revenues from the Marriott and Sony's Metreon are tied to profits, providing funding to maintain the Gardens and the arts complex. Buildings like Sony's Metreon and the 3rd and Mission Street project were redesigned to ensure their proper architectural "fit." All developers must look to locals as a "first source" employee pool, and many must participate in welfare-to-work programs. Access for disabled people had to exceed existing legal requirements (this predated the Americans with Disabilities Act). The public park had to include the historic carousel from Playland at the Beach, and historical photographs were designed into the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in the plaza.

The various exactions also played a role in the Agency's second strategy, what one observer has called "client construction." For several of the key facilities – in particular, the Center for the Arts and the children's' cultural center (Zeum) – the Agency reserved

space, earmarked operating funds, and actually began building long before there was a client to run the finished projects. Rather than selecting an existing organization to take over the facility, the Agency went to the community to develop its own institutions during construction, and then, after literally growing them to fit their tasks, encouraged them to form private nonprofit agencies. Given the length of time involved – more than 20 years – this strategy required an impressive consistency of vision.

Community Organizations

Community representatives explained emphatically to the site visit team that concessions were won from, not granted by, the Agency and the development process. Indeed, there is every indication that hard-fought battles attended nearly every major decision along the way, although most participants would agree that these battles ultimately strengthened the project, interjecting community perspectives into the process and educating the Agency about its role in the neighborhood. For example, an official at the child care center describes how local youths refused to back down on their request for a bowling alley, ultimately overruling the Agency with a carefully planned advocacy campaign. In fact, Yerba Buena's entire youth-oriented complex owes much to continuous pressure by local groups. The Selection Committee saw this narrative as crucial to the project's success, celebrating "how far we've come since the 1960s" by recognizing and awarding as Gold Medallists not just the Redevelopment Agency, but all contributors to Yerba Buena.

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The battles over Yerba Buena have also spurred the creation of community organizations that have continued to advocate for residents as development continues. Thus TOOR, instrumental in strengthening and enforcing the City’s legal obligation to provide low- and moderate-income housing in the early 1970s, became TODCO, a neighborhood-based nonprofit housing development corporation. TODCO prepared a 1981 master plan for the Yerba Buena Gardens Neighborhood, the only planning vision to flesh out the relationship between the central blocks and the residential area around them. The group helped form the South of Market Alliance to negotiate a “neighborhood benefits package” to be incorporated into the Redevelopment Agency’s formal plan for the project. Some of the benefits negotiated included 300 units of low-and moderate-income housing in the surrounding blocks, “first source” hiring

agreements for locals, ownership and operation of a significant portion of South of Market enterprises by neighborhood residents, and ongoing community participation in the planning process. TODCO has also developed four low-income housing projects and has been instrumental in advocating for the supermarket currently being planned by the Redevelopment Agency. Finally, the organization runs a community garden on a separate plot rented from the Redevelopment Agency for \$50 per month.

St. Patrick’s Church, one of the few historic buildings rescued from the bulldozers by neighborhood intervention, still serves the social outreach function it developed during the “Skid Row” years of the 1960s and 1970s, catering now to a mostly Filipino congregation. The church constructed Alexis, a 204-unit low-income housing project, as part of the post-lawsuit relocation strategy. Of more recent vintage, the South of Market Foundation grew out of coordination between existing community groups in 1990. The Foundation serves as an economic development contractor to the Redevelopment Agency, providing location and technical assistance, loan packaging, and other business-related services within Yerba Buena and the nearby earthquake recovery area.

Although determined to debunk any claims of magnanimity on the part of the Redevelopment Agency or the big developers, these community groups do have kind words for the way Yerba Buena has evolved, and for the opportunities it now offers neighborhood residents and institutions. Amalita Pascual of the South of Market Foundation notes, with some surprise, that local residents attend



Garden gate at TODCO's Mendelsohn House

Garden and art events. At St. Patrick’s, Monsignor Bitanga’s congregation spills out into the Gardens each week after church. The church’s ethnic Filipino festivals also receive a boost from the Garden’s facilities and high profile. Yerba Buena’s youth programs also receive high marks: one-third of the child care center slots are subsidized and reserved for neighborhood kids; the CFA is open to local artists; and the extensive children’s facilities provide programmed activities for local kids. Unplanned benefits such as the Metreon’s Tai Chi Park and donations from the Marriott’s periodic furniture stock renewals to St. Patrick’s also emerged. Monsignor Bitanga’s jokingly refers to Marriott as one of the church’s “patron saints.”

The Yerba Buena Alliance

The nonprofit Yerba Buena Alliance, formed in 1991, brings together all the area stakeholders including businesses, residents, hotels, cultural organizations, and public agencies. Its overall goal is to promote the neighborhood through media and community relations and community outreach. It also serves as an umbrella managing organization for the neighborhood, maintaining a healthy level of communication among the area’s various constituencies through monthly meetings, monthly announcements, and a quarterly newsletter (*A New Leaf*). The Alliance is involved in most major aspects of Yerba Buena’s daily functioning, from arts programming to economic networking. Importantly, they have also developed the capacity to gather political support from community groups to address shared concerns; for example, they led a campaign to stop a topless bar from moving into the area. Though

they did not succeed, they were able to impose restrictions on its appearance and promotional activities. The Alliance’s cooperative, inclusive structure sets the tone for other group dynamics in Yerba Buena, providing a model for the cultural community, maintenance and security organizations, and community groups.

DESIGN

Master Plans

The heart of the planning process has been a set of concepts present, in one form or another, since very early in the development. The notion of mixing commercial, convention center, and entertainment facilities, for example, has been present since the first master plan. The other key elements date primarily from the lawsuit and Mayor Moscone’s Select Committee; these include the garden and its centrality, the cultural facilities, the youth accommodations and the low- and moderate-income housing. Although the specific formulations of these concepts have varied dramatically over the course of 45 years, five mayors, three master plans and their associated developers, and countless architects, the project has continued to be wedded to an enduring core vision.

The changing formulations of this core vision, however, have been an integral part of the story. The first plan, produced by Kenzo Tange and then Gerald M. McCue and Associates, was designed to connect the South of Market area to the financial district north of Market Street. To do this while providing a safe and hospitable zone for commercial development, Tange and McCue both proposed

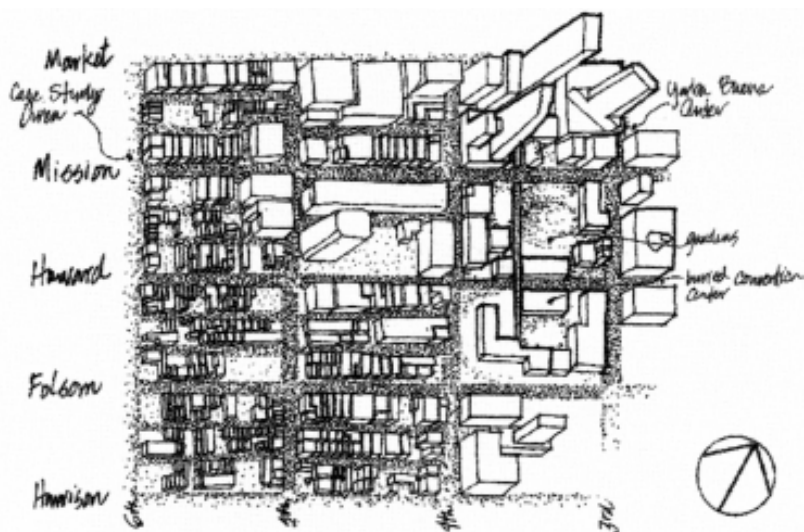
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to divide the redevelopment area into central and peripheral blocks. The central blocks, featuring a convention center and a sports stadium, would be “protected” against the still “blighted” surrounding neighborhoods by the peripheral blocks, which would be a ring of high-rise office buildings. The developer, Schlesinger/Arcon-Pacific, added Lawrence Halprin and Mario Ciampi to the McCue design team to flesh out the “urban fortress” plan. In hindsight, the plan’s disregard for local residents stands out as one of its most salient aspects.

It was this disregard that ultimately spelled defeat for the Tange-McCue plan amidst a welter of legal challenges in the 1970s. When interest again began picking up, the very first steps involved high-profile consultations with the public through Moscone’s Select Committee and official recognition of TOOR through formal agreements about housing. The plan that emerged from this process relied heavily on the Select Committee’s recommendations and TOOR’s demands. Produced by developer Olympia & York with Agency and community oversight and designed by Zeidler Roberts Architects, the new concept centered around an open and inviting garden esplanade. The input of local residents (some legally enforced by the lawsuit) was evident in the expanded plans for low-income housing, and in agreements encouraging (and financing) TOOR to enter the housing development business itself. The cultural component resulted mostly from the suggestions of local artists invited into the planning process. Finally, commercial voices were by no means overshadowed amidst competing agendas, as the original vision of convention center, retail, office buildings, and entertainment complexes remained.

As Olympia & York’s development capacity slowly fell apart in the 1980s, San Francisco’s Redevelopment Agency cannily salvaged the key concepts from the ruins. In the process, it became ever more responsible on a day-to-day basis as the steward of good design and the mediator of different agendas. The Agency’s selection of architects has been particularly strong, and its interventions during planning and construction have been effective. It is no accident that Yerba Buena has become a showcase for “new” architecture,



Over the years the Yerba Buena Gardens master plan began to soften the edges of the complex and open it to the surrounding neighborhood. (Drawing reprinted by *Places* from Cheryl Parker’s “Making a 21st-Century Neighborhood,” vol 10 #1, 1995)

boasting such famous names as Fumihiko Maki, James Stewart Polshek, Mario Botta, Mitchell Giurgola, and others on its buildings and landscapes. The Agency did not request proposals for specific buildings but instead chose architects based on a request for qualifications; conceptually, this approach meant a healthy diversity of designs, while practically it meant that the Agency could still exercise some influence over each design. And, importantly, the Agency was not afraid to wield this design influence, even when faced with powerful developers and talented architects.

Main Project Elements

Public Space

Yerba Buena’s central gardens (the Esplanade) is the cohesive public element that ties the complex project together and connects it to the surrounding blocks. The Esplanade is a central open green space with simple planting. An extensive ramp and fountain system, capped by an overlook, relates surrounding restaurants and cafés to the green and performance areas and to a Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial below. Entrances to the Metreon, the Visual Arts Center, and the Performing Arts Center all open onto the green, and SFMoMA’s main entrance aligns with an east-west walkway that also joins the Center for the Arts to the Metreon. The park is well used, well maintained, and well suited to its passive functions as well as to the approximately 60 programmed events in the spring, summer, and fall of each year. The Esplanade was designed to accommodate small, intimate gatherings as well as performance art or public events drawing up to 5,000 people. The Selection Committee, however, questioned how well this balance has been



Looking across the main plaza toward San Francisco MoMA from the Metreon

struck, noting that the space is sparsely landscaped – perhaps favoring large public assemblies over smaller passive recreational uses.

Commercial Development

The 650,000-square-foot Moscone Convention Center is made up of an original building dating from the late 1970s, and a two-part expansion dating from the late 1980s. The two parts are quite different from each other, and both have been criticized in the architectural press for the way they relate to the surrounding streets. The original building is fairly typical of convention centers: a large box with a grand, welcoming front (north) flanked by three landscaped but essentially unfriendly exteriors (east, south, and west). Its design is fundamentally passive, and creates “dead” elevations on the surrounding sidewalks. The expansion,

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North side of Howard Street entrance to the Moscone Convention Center with the esplanade and terrace above and to the left of the photo.

meanwhile, presents the key feature of the Convention Center, and a key element of the Yerba Buena master plan. At the insistence of Agency and community representatives, the expansion was put underground, thus reducing the structure's mass and impact, and allowing for more community-friendly uses such as the gardens and the Center for the Arts that sit atop it. From this point of view, the sinking was an unqualified success. The expansion has, however, received its share of criticism for street-level issues, particularly for the imposing service ramps that block foot traffic from the western side.

The Marriott Hotel was the first major commercial property developed, and is the only piece representing the Olympia & York

era. Its size and location have helped make it one of the chain's highest performing hotels. The W Hotel, developed by Hampshire, LLC, opened in June 1999 on Third Street adjacent to SFMoMA. The first new hotel to open in San Francisco since the Marriott, the W is the flagship for the Starwood hotel chain. To help enliven Third Street, it includes an upscale street-level restaurant called XYZ. In addition, the Millennium Partners, working through their San Francisco associate WDG Ventures, is developing on Market Street between Third and Fourth the Four Seasons Hotel and Tower, a \$400 million dollar project featuring a hotel and 142 high-end condominiums (at an average of 2,000 square feet apiece, they are slated to sell for \$700 per square foot). Finally, Carpenter and Company's Third Street and Mission project will open in 2003 as a mixed-use building featuring a hotel, health club, African-American cultural center, and 95 high-end condominiums. Carpenter selected Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill as architects, although the Agency has reserved the right to give input. Since this is the last parcel of land in the area, the Agency conceives of this project as its last chance to influence the design character of Yerba Buena; in addition to the mixed-use theme, the building also highlights the area as a 24-hour neighborhood.

The Metreon, Sony's first large-scale urban entertainment center, is a five-story, \$100 million, 350,000-square-foot entertainment colossus, and establishes the last built "edge" to Yerba Buena Gardens. Designed by Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Morris, the Metreon faces the park on its west edge, and has extensive frontage on Fourth Street. The building's second floor entertainment



Metreon plaza entrance with the Marriott Hotel in the background

complex is sandwiched by retail tenants on both the first and third floors, and is anchored by an IMAX theater and a 15-screen cinema complex. Originally slated by WDG Ventures to be a multi-tenant building, the Metreon was unexpectedly leased in its entirety to an eager Sony Corporation, which uses it as an entertainment retail complex, showcasing its products. Sony was drawn to Yerba Buena by company policy – it was looking for downtown areas in transition with large site conditions – and by its recognition that San Francisco had nowhere to grow but South of Market. Getting there first, a company spokesman remarked, promised a variety of benefits. A confident Sony has projected more than 6 million visitors annually. Attendance thus far has exceeded projections.

Despite its size and high-powered finances, the Metreon has remained within the bounds of the Redevelopment Agency’s vision. At the Agency’s request, the building was redesigned (at a significant cost) to feature a 4-story atrium on the Garden side so that sunlight can still pass through to the Esplanade; the transparent walls also permit visitors to see and be seen from the gardens. Circulation links connect through the building to Fourth Street, where the somewhat unfriendly façade is softened by a number of pedestrian entrances (which also help lessen the impact of the Convention Center’s service ramps). Sony is required to reserve a minimum of \$1.35 million annually in contracts for women and minority-owned businesses. Finally, the Metreon helped secured the support of locals by providing a small park for seniors to practice Tai Chi.

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Terrace entrance to the Center for the Arts designed by James Stewart Polshek

The Museums

Center for the Arts

The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (CFA) consists of two buildings: a theater designed by James Polshek, and a galleries and forum building designed by Fumihiko Maki. The two parts share a single arts director. The CFA's mission is complex and diverse: it supports experimental and mainstream arts programs while remaining an accessible space for local art and performance projects. After one or two relatively lean years, the CFA has incorporated itself deeply into San Francisco's art scene. By two years it was already collaborating with six museums and 18 dance companies, and currently at least nine performance groups depend on it to guarantee advance booking. The use is fairly well balanced between local, experimental, and internationally known groups. At this point, five years after its opening, it appears to be succeeding in its mission, and has operated in the black every year.

Annually, 50 groups receive partial subsidies for performance work, 12 full subsidies for artists in residence are available, and three international groups make an appearance. Thus although the Center is open to local artists, performing or installing there is still a status-enhancing coup. Indeed, locals benefit from the guidance of the CFA staff, which offers technical and programmatic assistance to inexperienced groups.

The wide variety of constituencies served by the CFA has led one observer to describe the Center as a kind of "arts campus" available for museums, schools, and other institutions to use as a

performance or gallery space, audiovisual studio, or whatever else they might need. The space has become so popular, in fact, it is somewhat at risk of degenerating into a mere rental facility without its own artistic vision. This tendency, however, has at least partially resulted from leadership issues that appear to have been resolved with the recent hiring of John Killacky. A proven arts administrator, Killacky has reaffirmed the CFA mission in regional and local arts promotion while ensuring its national and international reputation with a smart mix of programs.

San Francisco MoMA

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's (SFMoMA) presence at Yerba Buena was the result of a recruiting effort. In the late 1980s, the museum had outgrown its home on the third and fourth floors of the old war memorial building at the Civic Center. In 1987, the Redevelopment Agency approached the museum and asked it to join the Yerba Buena arts complex, sweetening its request by offering the land for just one dollar. Even so, it was a tough sell: Yerba Buena's arts complex was still a dream – the CFA would not open for six more years – and the area South of Market still retained its “Skid Row” reputation. Some SFMoMA board members claimed never to have even *been* South of Market; local wit offered Market Street as the dividing line between Northern and Southern California should the two regions ever separate. Nonetheless, SFMoMA made the move, locating its new signature building, designed by Mario Botta, on Third Street, and has never regretted its decision. In 1990, its first year at Yerba Buena, annual attendance quadrupled and membership tripled. As 800,000

visitors flooded the museum that year, it enjoyed some of the biggest months in its 60-year history. Indeed, some of these months were big by any standard: the SFMoMA rose to become the ninth most attended museum in the United States. As far as finances, it plans to receive revenue from its for-profit parking garage (which will provide the location and funds for a future rooftop sculpture garden), its café, and its museum store, which is reported by SFMoMA to be the most successful per-square-foot museum retail store in the nation. One explanation for the retail success is the small retail footprint and very dense merchandise displays. In light of these successes, it is fortunate that the building was designed to accommodate expansion, which is already being planned after only four years of operation.



Mario Botta's San Francisco MoMA with plaza fountain in the foreground

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Zeum

“Zeum” is the name that eventually came to stand for the Children’s Center for Technology and the Arts. Initially, the youth theme was pushed by an organization called Friends of the Gardens (FOG), a panel of community advocates and representative city organizations that dates back to the Mayor’s Select Committee. After securing a large federal grant, Zeum gained more focus and carved a niche for itself as a studio for technology and the arts targeting older youth. This facility is arguably the crown jewel of the youth-oriented facilities (see “Other Children’s and Recreational Facilities” below).

These three anchors — CFA, SFMoMA, and Zeum — form the heart of the arts community. More than just physical proximity brings these facilities together; like the project as a whole, the arts scene depends on cooperation and coordination among its various parts. On a large scale, this has been the province of the Yerba Buena Alliance, whose yearly Gardens Gallery Walk brings 5-10,000 art admirers to experience Yerba Buena’s cultural scene, which also includes 20 or more smaller art galleries that have located in and around the central blocks. In all, the Garden hosts about 60 free art performances per year, with attendance averaging 5,000 per event.

But the arts community does not exist solely at such grand levels. Indeed, smaller details are even more revealing of the extent of interdependency among the various facilities. For example, when the SFMoMA closes on Wednesdays – instead of the more usual

Mondays – it leaves a sign directing visitors to the CFA; tellingly, Wednesdays are the CFA’s highest volume days. Correspondingly, when the CFA is closed on Mondays a sign points visitors to the SFMoMA. The SFMoMA uses the CFA’s theater as its presentation house, particularly useful for educational programming. The museum has also developed a good synergy with the nearby California Historical Society. Materials are borrowed back and forth, and occasional companion shows link them directly. Tickets



Zeum interior video installation

to SFMoMA are good at the Historical Society, and 25% of the Historical Society’s new audience can be traced to this nicety.

All of this intensive joint activity has had an impact on the city as a whole. Officials at SFMoMA have noted an increase in citywide arts cooperation. SFMoMA and the CFA have taken part in shared shows or exchanges with the de Young Museum and the Asian Art Museum located elsewhere in the city. At the financial level, San Francisco’s arts community was knit together under the pressure of the “tax-revolt” Proposition 13. Instead of competing with each other for City funding, all the arts groups got together and fought for a share of the city’s hotel tax dollars, which they then divided up cooperatively among themselves (40% for the big institutions, 60% for the small ones). This strategy helped make funding clearer to businesses interested in helping the arts. In an unusual move, San

Francisco’s hotels actually approached the City and requested an increase in their bed taxes to help support the arts.

Other Children’s and Recreational Facilities

In addition to Zeum, the Rooftop at Yerba Buena features an historic carousel, a bowling alley, an ice skating rink, a child care center, and a children’s garden, all of which are on top of the original Moscone building. Designed by architect Adele Santos, the structures are painted in striking colors – mauve and yellow-orange, for example – and employ a sensuous, curvilinear geometry toward the inside of the block. The buildings feature many appropriately child-scaled features such as lowered windows. Again the Selection Committee affirmed the importance of making a designed-for asset, especially when most other entertainment and retail complexes of this type are trying to keep them out.



The roof top play area on top of the Moscone Convention Center



The historic carousel relocated from San Francisco’s Playland-at-the-Beach

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Housing

TODCO has developed four housing projects that provide space for about 1700 low-income, disabled, and elderly residents. Three of the six buildings, holding 500 households (approximately 700 tenants), are in Yerba Buena Center proper. Seventy-five percent of the residents are elderly or have disabilities, 20% are African American, 40% are Chinese American, 20% are Filipinos, and the remaining represent a mixture of other cultures and ethnicities. Rents are subsidized, ranging from 30% to 40% of household income. The Woolf Houses I, II, and III (212 units) were completed in 1979, 1982, and 1996 respectively; Ceatrice Polite Apartments (91 units) in 1984; the design award-winning Mendelsohn House (189 units), designed by local architect Bob Herman in 1988; and the Leland Apartments (24 units) in 1997. The funding for these buildings came from a variety of sources: the Woolf Houses were built with funds from the California Housing Finance Agency; Ceatrice Polite is a HUD building; and Mendelsohn depended upon trustee and City (hotel tax) money. The buildings are managed by an outside company, but TODCO stays in close contact with tenants through a variety of services such as arts workshops, exercise and recreation classes, nutrition and wellness programs, and counseling. A licensed residential care facility with 150+ units is in the works.

Beyond the TODCO homes, the diverse housing mix ranges from the Yerba Buena Commons SRO project, which caters to low-income hospitality workers, to the approximately 1,500 market-rate units (20% of which are subsidized for low- and moderate-income residents), to the Four Seasons' high-end condos. Providing



TODCO's Mendelsohn House on Folsom Street



Community garden plots for local residents on land permanently secured by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

housing for a range of income levels and household characteristics is very much a part of the vision for Yerba Buena as a new downtown neighborhood.

Streetscape

While several well-known architects are associated with the buildings of Yerba Buena, both the site visit team and the Selection Committee agreed with a critique leveled by the professional press and identified in Yerba Buena’s own award application: architecturally, the project presents a mixture of significant accomplishments that have not been perfectly integrated to create a unified place. Thus, impressive elements like the buried Convention Center, the extensive list of high-stature cultural facilities, and the striking architecture of buildings like the SFMoMA coexist with missed opportunities at the streetscape level, particularly on Third Street and in some of the public spaces created by the buildings on the esplanade.

URBAN CONTEXT

Edges

Yerba Buena is bounded by high-end downtown retail and the financial district to the north; a mixed neighborhood of families, transients, retail, and light industrial space to the west; a developing area being taken over by offices and retail to the east, and two main freeways to the south, beyond which is the future site of the new baseball stadium in the China Basin. It is thus on the way from and to major destinations in three directions, especially between the freeways and downtown.

Efforts have been made to connect the development area to its neighbors. Pedestrian walkways, for example, criss-cross Yerba Buena along the north-south and east-west axes; a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit, the regional transit system) station will open soon at the Four Seasons Hotel & Tower; and visually, the low-profile convention center and the few high-rises present a relatively soft border to adjacent neighborhoods. The Selection Committee felt, however, that these nearby residential areas could in fact have been better connected to the Garden: while the project’s current edges are far more permeable than the barricade-like boundaries featured in the original Tange plan, a dramatic difference remains between the new cultural and entertainment area and surrounding residential blocks. The Committee did see reason to expect improvement in this regard, particularly through the as-yet-unfinished pedestrian walkways. Ultimately, for an area as intensely developed as Yerba Buena, the project is surprisingly well integrated into the city.

A Pedestrian’s-Eye View

Of Yerba Buena’s unresolved streetscape issues, none is more important or vexing than Third Street. Originally intended to be a service street at the edge of the project, Third Street has become a central part of the project and is the main entrance to the SFMoMA. The hotels flanking the SFMoMA were not complete as of our site visit (though the “W” has since opened), and though they promise further street-level attractions (for example the XYZ restaurant, which has also opened since our visit), their eventual impact on the streetscape is difficult to determine. As of our site visit, the west side of the street, which forms the eastern edge of Yerba Buena, was

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basically a blank wall burdened by service entrances to the Performing Arts Center and the Visual Arts Center. While this lifeless frontage is ameliorated to some extent by SFMoMA's café and bookstore across the street and the East Garden, the axis between the CFA and SFMoMA across Third Street is a major access point that unfortunately feels like an afterthought.

Other street-level problems are less stark. Despite landscaping, the Convention Center makes a relatively sterile edge on the south and west perimeter of the project leading up to the Metreon on Fourth Street. The Metreon itself, however, allows foot traffic through to

the interior of the Gardens, and the Tai Chi park and commercial frontage break up the building's monolithic street edge on Fourth Street. The facade above the first floor also provides variation with eye-catching cinema bays and the IMAX screen on the corner of Fourth and Mission. The Mission Street facade north of the Garden is the most open to the street, featuring multiple ways into the Garden, good sight lines from the Garden out to St. Patrick's Church, the future Jewish and Mexican Museums, the Marriott, and the new Four Seasons Hotel on Market Street. A pedestrian spine is under construction that will link Market Street to Yerba Buena, threading through the garden and leading over the convention center along the way to the children's facilities. This pathway is designed to be a major pedestrian connector leading to the central block. It will be marked on Market Street with an entrance adjacent to as well as through the Four Seasons Hotel now under construction, and will eventually be fully landscaped and framed by commercial activity.



The Third Street facade of James Polshak's Center for the Arts has been criticized for the blank wall it presents to the street.

Parking and Traffic

The Agency has been especially attentive to the potentially calamitous transportation consequences of such a large, sensitively located development. Consistent with City policy, but not always with the concurrence of project developers, there has been a conscious decision to limit parking while promoting mass transit use, improving the pedestrian experience, and providing an extensive bicycle system. Thus, for example, the 2,600 car garage at Fifth and Mission streets has sacrificed 55 parking spaces for a ground-level retail complex to make its street edge friendlier. The

area’s parking fees are structured to discourage long-term commuter parking (rates go up after the second hour). Pedestrian walkways, talking street signs, widened sidewalks, timed signals, red light cameras, and mid-block traffic lights will all help make walking an attractive option.

MAINTENANCE, OPERATIONS AND SECURITY

One of Yerba Buena’s more impressive aspects is the smoothly coordinated day-to-day management of the complex. The Redevelopment Agency contracts with KTB Realty Partners, Inc., a private property management firm, to manage the maintenance and security in close collaboration with the arts programmers. The Selection Committee was pleased with the cooperative management dynamics developed between these organizations and other interests outside the formal property boundaries of Yerba Buena. KTB issues permits for use of the public spaces for all planned organized events, of which there are between 67 and 100 per year, ranging from the “TODCO poets” to the San Francisco Opera. This requires more than just careful scheduling. KTB works with arts programmers to ensure that the space isn’t “overactivated,” turning visitors into passive receptors of recreation. Event organizers work with KTB’s Mary McCue and the CFA’s Mario Garcia Durham to develop their programs and get permits. All outdoor events are free, and permits, while required for just about anything, are fairly easy to get. Four times a year the entire space can be rented out for private functions; the lease revenue provides funds for the free public programming.

Security arrangements are anchored by a “faces with places” program, in which the security personnel of all the buildings around

the Gardens – public and private – meet every two months to share security information and concerns. Because of this coordination, Yerba Buena’s facilities all share a single, efficient central dispatch (it once was the first to respond to a call from St. Patrick’s). Their cameras also operate together to form a comprehensive network. Finally, security and maintenance workers are familiar with the area, are available to offer help for visitors and, on occasion, to appear in public performances. This friendly style is further embodied in rules allowing people to sleep on the grass or even on the benches when the area is not crowded; also, people are generally not asked to leave. Individual vendors, however, are not allowed, and panhandlers are asked to get a permit. Overall, the security program is so successful that Mary McCue is a sought-after instructor, teaching about the arrangements to staff at Oakland’s City Center, San Francisco’s Union Square and Civic Center, and Philadelphia’s Independence Square.

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FINANCES TABLE

PROJECT	SIZE	Units	COST (\$ MIL)	% PUBLIC	LDA	EXACTION	AMOUNT	USE
MOSCONE CONVENTION CENTER (WITH EXPANSIONS)	1.3 MILLION SQ. FT.	N/A	330	100%	PURCHASE	20 YEARS OF RENT PAYMENTS	\$896,000 ANNUALLY	
MARRIOTT HOTEL	1.9 MILLION SQ. FT.	1500 rooms	300	0	LEASE	LEASE PAYMENTS TIED TO PROFIT		RENT USED FOR CFA MAINTENANCE AND GARDENS OPERATIONS
ESPLANADE GARDEN	5.5 ACRES	N/A	40	100%				
CENTER FOR THE ARTS	100,000 SQ. FT.--THREE GALLERIES, VIDEO SCREENING ROOM, MULTIPURPOSE FORUM, 775-SEAT THEATER	N/A	40	100%				
CHILDREN'S FACILITIES	34,000 SQ. FT. ZEUM 32,000 SQ. FT. ICE SKATING/BOWLING 10,000 SQ. FT. CHILD CARE CTR 130,000 SQ. FT. OUTDOOR SPACE	N/A	58	100%				
METREON	350,000 SQ. FT.	N/A	100	0	PURCHASE	WELFARE-TO-WORK FIRST SOURCE AGREEMENT		
SFMOMA	225,000 SQ. FT.	N/A	65	0	PURCHASE			
W HOTEL	305,450 SQ. FT.	423 rooms	73	0	PURCHASE	WELFARE-TO-WORK FIRST SOURCE AGREEMENT HUNT LANE OPEN SPACE	\$700,000	HALF THE COST FOR PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY
FOUR SEASONS HOTEL & TOWER	750,000 SQ. FT.	250 hotel rooms 270,000 sq. ft. condos.	350		PURCHASE	ONE-TIME PAYMENT WELFARE-TO-WORK FIRST SOURCE AGREEMENT CHILDCARE FEE AFFORDABLE HOUSING FEE CONTRIBUTION TO SECURITY, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF CB-2	\$2 MILLION \$750,000 \$2 MILLION 160,000 ANNUALLY	
THIRD AND MISSION STREET PROJECT NE CORNER	492,000 SQ. FT.	500 Units	129		BOND FINANCING PURCHASE	AFFORDABLE HOUSING FEE. CHILDCARE FEE	\$2.6 MILLION, \$492,000	20% UNITS FOR LOW INCOME
TODCO HOUSING								
WOOLF HOUSES I, II, III	150,000 SQ. FT.	212	14	100%				
CEATRICE POLITE AP'TS	79,445 SQ. FT.	91	8	100%				
MENDELSONH HOUSE	151,000 SQ. FT.	189	15	100%				
TOTAL	11.4 MIL. SQ. FT.	2995	15.2 BILLION				9.6 MILLION	

FINANCING

The Redevelopment Agency has been shrewd and creative in its efforts to secure funding for the project without sacrificing its vision. This has involved relying on a wide variety of funding sources. Thus tax increment financing, land sales, the City’s hotel tax, private developer investment, and exactions have all played important roles in keeping Yerba Buena moving forward and in creating its richness and programming.

In addition to the obvious advantage of owning all the land, a two-part strategy has guided the Agency’s pursuit of funds. First, they invested energy and significant public dollars into planning the land to make it worth more, and then used the profits from that added value to pay for the planned improvements and operations. The crucial element here was the Garden, plans for which raised land values enough to provide \$26 million in tax increment funds. In turn, the promise of the Garden gave the Agency leverage in the second of the two major strategies, exacting funds from private developers to invest in the cultural and youth facilities and the open space. In short, the Agency put forward a vision for Yerba Buena and then banked on it, parlaying its own faith in future development into funding from developers.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

A consistent theme that stands out in the narrative of Yerba Buena is the delicate web of relationships that have evolved between the City of San Francisco and the neighborhood’s various private stakeholders. The most striking example is the role of private

nonprofit housing developers like TODCO and St. Patrick’s Church. The powerful narrative of TODCO’s transformation from opponent to collaborator has been institutionalized in current arrangements, in which the community group is responsible for carrying out the Agency’s legal obligation to provide low-income housing in Yerba Buena. That a private developer would be selected to undertake this responsibility may be no surprise; that such a selection would be used to meaningfully incorporate the Agency’s one-time implacable foe is emblematic of this project’s democratic creativity.

The agreements with TODCO were not the Agency’s only public-private partnership. The Yerba Buena dream could also not have been achieved without the exactions agreed to by major private players like the Marriott and Sony (see “Finances” chart and



Plaza entrance to the Center for the Arts

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“Leadership” above). Those private developers would probably not have been so eager to join Yerba Buena if the City had not made serious commitments to the location through quality planning and extensive additions to the transit infrastructure. Both sides, clearly, were willing to make extra investments to make the project work. Developers accepted extra costs and design complications, and the City only demanded exactions that had specific value for the Yerba Buena concept.

This self-interested but unselfish commitment to Yerba Buena’s overall goals also appeared in what is surely the most innovative of the Redevelopment Agency’s strategies, the “client construction” that created private organizations to run several key art facilities (see “Leadership” above). Here, the Agency served as a nursery for private institutions, crafting them carefully within the protected space of public ownership until they were prepared to pursue their mission as private nonprofits. Underlying these transactions is the assumption that the private and public sectors are not opponents, nor is one the simple handmaiden for the other; rather, both must work together as crucial contributors to a larger agenda. This spirit of cooperation and compromise, embedded in the concrete deals struck between the Agency and Yerba Buena’s developers, make the project a hopeful model that other cities could do well to emulate.

IMPACT ON THE CITY

San Francisco has reaped a number of benefits from Yerba Buena. Aesthetically, it has raised its worldwide stature by

becoming a showcase for the giants of “new” architecture. In social terms, key developments include an improved commitment to low- and moderate-income housing in the downtown area, increased cooperation within the city’s arts community, and the enlivening of the downtown financial area. Politically, the City and Redevelopment Agency will leave this project extremely well educated in the process of urban renewal; this knowledge will hopefully serve them in good stead as they turn their efforts to the earthquake recovery area to the west of Yerba Buena and the redevelopment area to the east. Also, the development of viable political organizations at the neighborhood level, if sustainable, bodes well for future efforts to renew or reclaim troubled areas. Further, Yerba Buena’s economic impact is considerable. Beyond bringing in tourist and tax dollars, the project has shown a



Skating rink with view of downtown in background

promising ability to generate jobs. And, perhaps most importantly, the exaction process has provided a model for how cities can entice business development without submitting to a one-way courtship of high-cost corporate giveaways.

FUTURE PLANS

Several large-scale building projects are on the immediate horizon. The Four Seasons and the hotels on Third Street are under construction. The Convention Center will expand again soon behind the Fifth & Mission garage, and SFMoMA also has plans to grow. TODCO's next project is a licensed residential care facility with 150+ apartments slated for the year 2000. Additionally, a 494 unit apartment building on Third and Mission that began construction in August 1999; 100 of its units are for low- and moderate-income tenants.

A number of transportation improvements are also in the pipeline. Most importantly, a light rail transit link is planned to China Basin and the new baseball stadium; it will be above grade several blocks south of Yerba Buena, then go underground beneath downtown to Chinatown and points north. Public transportation enhancement will be supported by improved pedestrian and bicycle pathways, most notably the walking path that will link Market Street to Mission Street through the garden and past the Convention Center.

In general, the Selection Committee felt that prospects for sustainability were very good. Exactions from the development process have taken care of the basic infrastructure and overhead of

the arts complex, making it easier for the cultural facilities to fulfill their double role as profitable institutions and as accessible venues for local and internationally known artists. Also, the Committee noted that the project's diverse group of stakeholders provides a healthy system of checks and balances for future development. Yerba Buena presents itself as a work-in-progress: while most of the big construction has been completed, fine tuning of the general character, management, and public spaces will doubtlessly continue well into the future.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS

HOW WELL PROJECT MEETS ITS OWN GOALS

- *To reclaim a previously marginalized sector of the city.*

Yerba Buena has made great progress toward accomplishing this goal. Economic activity South of Market has increased astronomically, cultural life is thriving, the housing ills are being addressed, and land values have continued to rise. As Monsignor Bitanga put it after his return to the area in 1994, the difference was obvious: "more clean clothes," he explains, "and fewer street people." While there is clear evidence of gentrification, the success of TODCO and of other housing providers (including the Salvation Army) has put an end to mass displacement. The area has a diverse mix of rich and poor and enjoys broad ethnic diversity.

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- *To provide employment, children’s facilities, open space, cultural facilities, and other amenities to its citizens.*

The children’s facilities, open public space, cultural facilities, and other amenities like the Tai Chi park and the skating rink testify to Yerba Buena’s success in meeting this goal. Job creation has been more challenging; as could be expected, there are serious obstacles to overcoming this entrenched problem. Although the number of jobs has gone up in the area, many of them require more training than local residents have. Nonetheless, given the nature of the employment dilemma, one would have to characterize the advances on this front as hard-won and significant.



The gardens present a variety of small-and large-scale planted areas.

- *To support the growing tourism industry.*

The growth of hotel rooms in the area, the increased number of events enabled by the expanded convention center, the mix of regional and international art venues, and Sony’s newly opened Metreon have all helped to make a substantial new place for repeat tourist visits even while it attracts local populations. Yerba Buena Gardens is clearly supporting San Francisco’s bid for a still larger share of the world’s tourism economy.

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Impact on Neighborhood and Community

Yerba Buena’s impact on its physical and social context is undeniable. In most instances, it has meant an improved quality of life. The site visit team observed that the proliferation of art galleries, restaurants, theaters, museums, entertainment facilities from the Metreon to the bowling alley, and of simple public open space have all made the area a lively, busy place. The youth-oriented facilities have given local young people alternatives to just “hanging out.” The emerging focus on pedestrian, bike, and mass transit usage will help make this new liveliness appear on a human scale rather than manifesting itself in traffic jams. The physical connections provided by Yerba Buena’s crisscrossing walkways and alleys have done much to improve the physical connectedness of the area as a whole. Finally, the opening of the BART station and the planned light rail to the area (possible in large part because of Yerba Buena’s traffic draw) will mean a greater incorporation into the city’s regular rhythms of day and night life. In all, the Selection Committee, many of whom were familiar with Yerba

Buena, confirmed the feeling that this was an ambitious, active, successful, “more-than-one-visit kind of place.”

The neighborhoods near Yerba Buena have seen fewer direct benefits. The intense attention and funds directed at Yerba Buena could easily have fostered a feeling that the surrounding neighborhood has been left out. Indeed, some locals do offer pointed observations in this regard. Criticisms, however, often sound more like “you should be doing that where I live too,” instead of actual disagreement with planning decisions. Beyond this, neighborhood advocates do acknowledge Yerba Buena’s positive impact. In addition to their participation in the cultural and entertainment scene, residents of the surrounding areas benefit from the mass transit upgrades and, not least, from the changed nature of the “new-look” Redevelopment Agency. The Agency has already declared itself more interested in preserving historic buildings as it turns its attentions to the east and west of Yerba Buena, and is proceeding under the displacement laws established by the TOOR suit. As renewal of the surrounding areas unfolds, it is safe to assume that it will be a better, less oppressive process because of the lessons of the 1970s.

Finally, the development process has played an important role in creating and then fostering neighborhood political self-awareness and organization. Groups like TODCO, the South of Market Alliance, the South of Market Foundation, the Yerba Buena Alliance, and the “faces with places” security group represent concrete examples of community identity. These organizations are

crucial to the coordination of this complex urban ecosystem on a short- and long-term basis. They also provide what has always been necessary in the “real” world of urban finance and development: the political muscle to make sure their community’s voice is heard even alongside such colossi as the Millennium Partners, Sony, and the Redevelopment Agency. Only through the vigilance and advocacy of these kinds of organizations can Yerba Buena continue as an entity committed to the needs of multiple constituencies.

Values Reflected in Development Process

The values that sustain Yerba Buena Gardens today are fundamentally democratic. The project has depended on good leadership and a lengthy process of development that in the end has left room for the negotiation of conflict in a manner that is flexible and inclusive. The core of this democratic process has been a commitment to the neighborhood and its promise, and a willingness to accept that it must be shared. Every major player has had to make significant tradeoffs of one sort or another. The leading example of this has been the Redevelopment Agency itself, which abandoned its dream of a giant development that would bear the imprimatur of a single great urban innovator, accepting instead a smaller role and shared credit. In short, rather than following a single agenda, Yerba Buena has developed along the lines of an actual neighborhood: messy, at times fractious, but also vibrant, self-correcting, and, at the best of times, a true community.

It was the impressive diversity of this functioning community that originally interested the Selection Committee in the project, though

they were skeptical that a development so big could truly succeed in paying attention to process and social justice. Yerba Buena’s rare openness to diverse populations and uses, however, persuaded the Committee that the “big must be bad” cliché had indeed been debunked. In a nation full of bad examples, the Committee noted, here is one large urban intervention that “got it right.”

The Selection Committee generalized three exportable lessons for the Yerba Buena experience:

- *Strong leadership is important to develop and sustain a core vision while remaining open and flexible to change.*

Yerba Buena has succeeded in no small part due to the strong leadership of the SFRA, TOOR, and its successor TODCO. They developed a sturdy core vision of a mixed-use commercial, office/convention center, entertainment, and cultural complex. This consistent core vision, importantly, has served as a foundation for flexibility. Valuable later additions like the Gardens, low-income housing, and youth-oriented facilities added significantly to the richness and complexity of the project. Once incorporated, these later concepts became part of the project’s core vision, stubbornly adhered to for nearly two decades. As a result, the Agency proved that a good development vision can be a solid basis for attracting commercial development – a basis ultimately cheaper and more productive than direct payoffs in the form of tax breaks, free land, and so forth. A good development vision can also sustain a project through changing political climates; Yerba Buena survived five mayoralties, each with a different idea of how to proceed. These

successes, the Selection Committee felt, depended upon having a consistent vision that nonetheless could be reshaped in response to ongoing community concerns. As one Selection Committee member remarked, they were willing to change but “didn’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

- *Conflict adds value to the project.*

Although the first lessons in this education were difficult and unwanted ones, the Agency learned it well. Throughout the development process Yerba Buena has illustrated that challengers can serve as educators, teaching how to incorporate conflict into the process and how to listen to divergent points of view. Taking this lesson to heart and including all voices – including local residents – can be difficult and frustrating, but it produces more vibrant and ultimately more viable results. This is particularly true if the forums created to enable people to talk to each other about a specific issues – say, for example, housing – are institutionalized so that discussion and negotiation can continue after the initial response has been formulated.

- *Process, program, and management should reflect a commitment to a place and be inclusive of the human communities and relationships that constitute it.*

Yerba Buena’s central open Garden announces one of the most important values embodied in the design process: this is a public space, open to all residents and visitors. The Agency came to recognize that valuing a place meant recognizing how different constituencies value it, and that commitment to a place means a

commitment to the communities who thus value it. A design process built on such a commitment meant involving local community voices, making use and programming of facilities inclusive and welcoming, creating an open and accessible design, and fostering an ongoing dialogue among residents, institutions, and businesses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Cheryl Parker, “Making a 21st century neighborhood,” *Places* (vol. 10 #1, 1995, pp. 36-45). *Suggests that the South of Market Area (SOMA) can be a prototype of the desirable “pocket community.” Pocket communities are a neighborhood-like miniature residential infill with mixed living/working buildings in mixed-used areas. Such developments, Parker proposes, offer an alternative to the large-scale commercial and residential development typical of post-industrial urban evolution.*

Ibid. “A story of change: Re-making San Francisco,” (Masters Thesis, UC Berkeley, 1993). *The more expansive piece from which “Making a 21st century neighborhood” was compiled.*

Chester Hartman, *Yerba Buena: Land Grab and Community Resistance in San Francisco*. (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1974). *Written during the days of the Redevelopment Authority’s first effort at Yerba Buena, Harman reveals just how bad the “bad old days” were. His chilling examples and powerful narrative depict a city office brought down by its own arrogance. Essential reading for understanding (a) why TODCO came into being, and (b) just how radical the Redevelopment Authority’s re-orientation has been since TODCO put an end to Yerba Buena’s first era.*

John Elberling, “An urban layer cake,” *SF Bay Guardian*, (November 17, 1993, pp. 14-15). *Elberling, a TODCO officer, explains that “[w]hat has been built and what is yet to come was planned much more by local politics than by the architects and planners of official record.” His newspaper article goes through each Mayor and respective “cake layer.”*

Sally B. Woodbridge, “When good urban plans go awry (Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco),” *Progressive Architecture*, (vol. 76, Nov. 1995, pp. 60-67). *Despite the efforts of many noted architects and landscape architects, Woodbridge argues, the area still looks cobbled together, in part because of the almost 30 years of false starts for the development.*

Clifford A. Pearson, “Metreon, San Francisco, California: What’s a shopping and entertainment center doing in an arts complex? Keeping the place busy around the clock,” *Architectural Record* (vol. 10, 1999, pp.154-160).

Related Rudy Bruner Award Winners

(For full bibliographic cites, please see Introduction)

Portland’s 1972 Downtown Plan (1989 cycle). A successful comprehensive planning process for downtown development that has engendered diverse uses (a “24-hour place”), a pedestrian focus, historic buildings, public open spaces, and improved air quality.

Lowerton, Saint Paul, Minnesota (1995 cycle). The redevelopment of a historic district near the downtown by a small private non-profit organization that has created a lively, mixed income and mixed use area, including retail, office, and low-mod and market rate housing.

GOLD MEDAL WINNER

Yerba Buena Gardens

Center in the Square, Roanoke, Virginia (1997 cycle). A downtown cultural center that brings together a group of cultural entities in a rent-free space. Created a new cultural and educational destination in Roanoke, and has sparked the revitalization of downtown.

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