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3 S.F. public housing areas getting rebuilt

By: Heather Knight

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Three more decrepit San Francisco public housing developments will be refashioned into denser neighborhoods that include some market-rate housing, under a new agreement between the Housing Authority and construction companies that say they're up for the job.

The Housing Authority Commission on Tuesday named Sunnydale in Visitacion Valley, the Potrero Terrace-Potrero Annex complex on Potrero Hill and Westside Courts in the Western Addition as the next developments to be rebuilt using a mix of public and private funds.

The remade projects will include the same number of public housing units they do now, as well as hundreds of new affordable and market-rate rental units and homes for sale to help offset the costs. In all, there will be about 3,000 units in the new neighborhoods. The commission agreed to enter into exclusive negotiating rights agreements with three development companies, meaning those companies are likely to split \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million in city seed money to begin drafting formal redevelopment plans.

Current residents of those old, sagging buildings probably won't move into the new apartments for several years because the development companies are expected to need two years to craft detailed plans for the rebuilds, obtain environmental approvals and develop a financing plan.

The director of the Housing Authority characterized the agreement with construction companies as an important step forward in Mayor Gavin Newsom's Hope SF initiative to rebuild the city's eight worst public housing developments. "This really moves forward the agenda that the mayor had envisioned when he created and the supervisors funded Hope SF," said Mirian Saez. "We can move forward in the next phase."

But tenant advocates said the decision is just one more example of tenants being left out of the decision-making process. John Eller, head organizer of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, said Sunnydale residents met Thursday to talk about what they want in a redevelopment plan. They had no idea the construction company that will remake their neighborhood had already been picked, he said. "They were shocked that they hadn't heard anything about it," Eller said.

City officials vow that the construction companies will work closely with residents. The selection process included consideration of whether the rebuilding plans included employment or apprenticeship opportunities for residents.

The Hunters View project in Hunters Point will be the first development rebuilt under Hope SF. Groundbreaking is expected next year. Bridge Housing Corp. will lead a team to build 605 public housing units and 1151 new units at the Potrero Hill development. Mercy Housing will lead a team to build 785 public housing units and 1,498 new units at Sunnydale. And Em Johnson Interest will lead a team to rebuild 136 existing units and 220 new units at Westside Courts.

