

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Mission Bay becoming a real neighborhood

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It's a Wednesday morning in San Francisco's newest neighborhood.

As construction workers raise steel into place on emerging high-rises, a man blasts a serve on the beach volleyball court under the Interstate 280 overpass.

Biotech workers and suited professionals crowd the bar at Philz Coffee, where tattooed baristas place mint leaves on steaming cups of individually filtered coffee.

Retiree Toby Levine surveys the Mission Bay morning from her high-rise terrace, where signs of a community are finally starting to emerge.

It's taken four mayors and three planning directors to create what is now the last swath of San Francisco land where planners can create a neighborhood from scratch. So far, 3,000 people have moved into the

300-acre rail yard south of the Giants baseball park. The neighborhood is 35 percent built, and 15 years from now, it's expected to have 11,000 residents.

Mission Bay feels as if it escaped the economic downturn - stores are opening, buildings are going up, and young professionals are zipping out of \$700,000 condos to get to work. Most live in a six-block area north of Mission Bay Creek. These pioneers say it's now starting to feel like a place worth staying in on the weekends.

### More crowded

"It's changed a lot. It's way more crowded now," said Claudia Arrenberg, 27, who shopped for pasta and fruit with her 2-year-old daughter at the new Mission Bay Farmers' Market.



Customers crowd into Philz Coffee in the Mission Bay neighborhood.

She moved into UCSF student housing with her husband in 2005 so he could study neuroscience. But it was such a ghost town that they moved to Alamo Square, even though it was more expensive. They returned in 2008.

There's a public library, senior housing, a Safeway beneath the offices of the California stem cell research headquarters.

Half of UCSF's 12 buildings are completed, and dog walkers and parents are beginning to draw battle lines over the patches of park.

"We got more families than we expected, many couples with kids who commute to the South Bay on Caltrain," said Kelley Kahn, who manages the Mission Bay project for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency.



Mission Bay neighbors shop for fresh produce at the UCSF Mission Bay campus farmers market in San Francisco.

"We thought we'd see more people in their late 20s, but it's older parents starting families and retirees wanting to leave the hassle of owning a house."

Levine is one of those retirees, who, after 40 years in the Mission District moved to a Mission Bay apartment in 2007 with her husband.

She began pushing for a tot lot after she discovered there were 300 children in Mission Bay, but no playground.

"I like the adventurousness of starting something new at my age, and being in the middle of a tremendously important development for the future of the city," said Levine, 75.

Mission Bay is expected to create 31,000 new permanent jobs that range from retailers to biomedical researchers.

Levine has found it difficult to create community in Mission Bay, and she figures that's because the young professionals who work so hard to afford to live there just want to close their doors and relax at the end of the workday.

It's an investment to move to Mission Bay - condos start at \$600,000 and go up to more than \$1 million.

Nearly one-third of Mission Bay's homes will be reserved for low-income families, more than is required by law, Kahn said.

### **Below-market rate**

Mission Walk - a two-building development with the first below-market-rate homes in the neighborhood - is set to open in September. Nearly 650 people applied for one of the 131 townhomes and condos, which were priced from \$149,000 to \$302,000.

The Mission Bay of the future will have 6,000 homes, a 43-acre UCSF campus that includes a 550-bed hospital, 41 acres of new parkland, 4.4 million square feet of biotech and lab space, and 500,000 square feet of retail shops. It will have a 500-room hotel and a public school.

Residential construction south of the creek has slowed, Kahn said, because developers can't get financing.

"If the economy is worse than we thought, and it stays this way for five or seven more years, we'll be in trouble, but right now we are OK. We have money in the bank," she said.



Construction workers add finishing touches to Mission Walk on Berry Street.