



SPENCER BROWN

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Condos join mix of older housing and warehouses

BY BLANCA TORRES
San Francisco Business Times

West Oakland is on the cusp. The neighborhood, which sits at the base of the Bay Bridge, could become the Bay Area's next great success story — if it can survive the current economic downturn.

Some developers see West Oakland as the next South of Market, a San Francisco neighborhood transformed from an under-utilized industrial zone to a booming office and residential district.

West Oakland's location seems ideal, with easy access to both downtown San Francisco and downtown Oakland. Its acres of empty land and abandoned industrial sites make it ripe for redevelopment.

Investment mostly skipped over West Oakland for decades, but that changed in the last several years. The neighborhood now balances attracting investment with preserving a rich history and sense of community.

Like other neighborhoods in the city, West Oakland experienced a housing boomlet with 1,000 units recently completed, under construction or approved. Plans are also in the works to revive the West Oakland Train Station, a historic site now vacant for more than two decades.

West Oakland, an area encircled by freeways, includes industrial warehouses, artist lofts, Victorian homes, one of the busiest BART stations, soccer fields, decades-old businesses and the train station that once served as the primary portal for newcomers to the Bay Area.

Perhaps no one understands the analogy between SoMa and West Oakland better than developer Rick Holliday. The first developer to build work/live units in SoMa in the early '90s, he decided to make a similar bet in 2000 on West Oakland by buying 29 acres between

Frontage Road and Wood Street to build a master development called Central Station.

Holliday eventually sold off some parcels of the land to other developers. He kept a section with a former cannery that he redeveloped into 163 lofts that hit the market in September.

Central Station also includes 130 townhomes by Pulte Homes, 99 affordable apartments built by Bridge Housing and another 350 to 400 apartments by Emeryville-based HFH Limited. Pulte has built more than a third of its units while Bridge Housing recently began construction on its site. HFH has yet to break ground.

Other developers such as Kathy Kuhner of Dogtown Development and Bill Lightner of Lighter Property Group are holding on to entitled residential projects there until the economy recovers.

Phil Tagami of California Capital Group, who also worked on restoring the Rotunda building and the Fox Theater, signed on to lead the restoration of the train station, which may become an events space.

Along with new housing, a neighborhood like West Oakland also needs to grow its job base, said Malo Hutson, assistant professor of city and regional planning at the University of California, Berkeley. The city is working to attract green companies, many of which may end up in West Oakland.

"The question is how do you attract green business and also, what do you do with the land?" Hutson said. "That could drastically change what happens in West Oakland."

The large tracts of new construction sit in contrast with an existing residential neighborhood lined with Victorian homes.

One issue some residents have is that shiny, new housing is built while they feel the existing community is ignored.

"This is a historically African-American neighborhood," said Maxine McKinney De Royston, who bought a renovated Victorian in West Oakland about a year and a half ago with her husband Reggie Royston. "I don't want West Oakland to look like Emeryville."

The Roystons, African-American graduate students at

UC Berkeley, want to live in a neighborhood with a strong sense of community and a diverse population. They say their main concern with the multi-family developments is that the residents want to stay in their units rather than become part of the neighborhood.

"The sentiment is that 'We've been fighting for so long to have some sort of development' and now there's all this investment, but it caters to newcomers," Hutson said.

Holliday has tried to address that issue by enlisting artist and entrepreneur Marcel Diallo to set up two galleries in the Pacific Cannery Lofts to showcase the work of about 30 artists who live within three blocks. The projects also includes a space for a café that Holliday is shopping to Tanya Holland, owner of the nearby Brown Sugar Kitchen. The restaurant opened in January and is usually packed.

"People here are just so happy to have a restaurant like this in the neighborhood," said Holland, who moved to West Oakland three and half years ago. "As a resident, I definitely feel a sense of community and pride. People here like connecting with each other."

More residents could support better amenities such as a full-service grocery store, dry cleaner and more restaurants. Residents also want more bus lines and infrastructure improvements.

The Roystons support the idea of improving the neighborhood with new development, but they would like to see it happen alongside a revitalization of the existing housing stock — house by house.

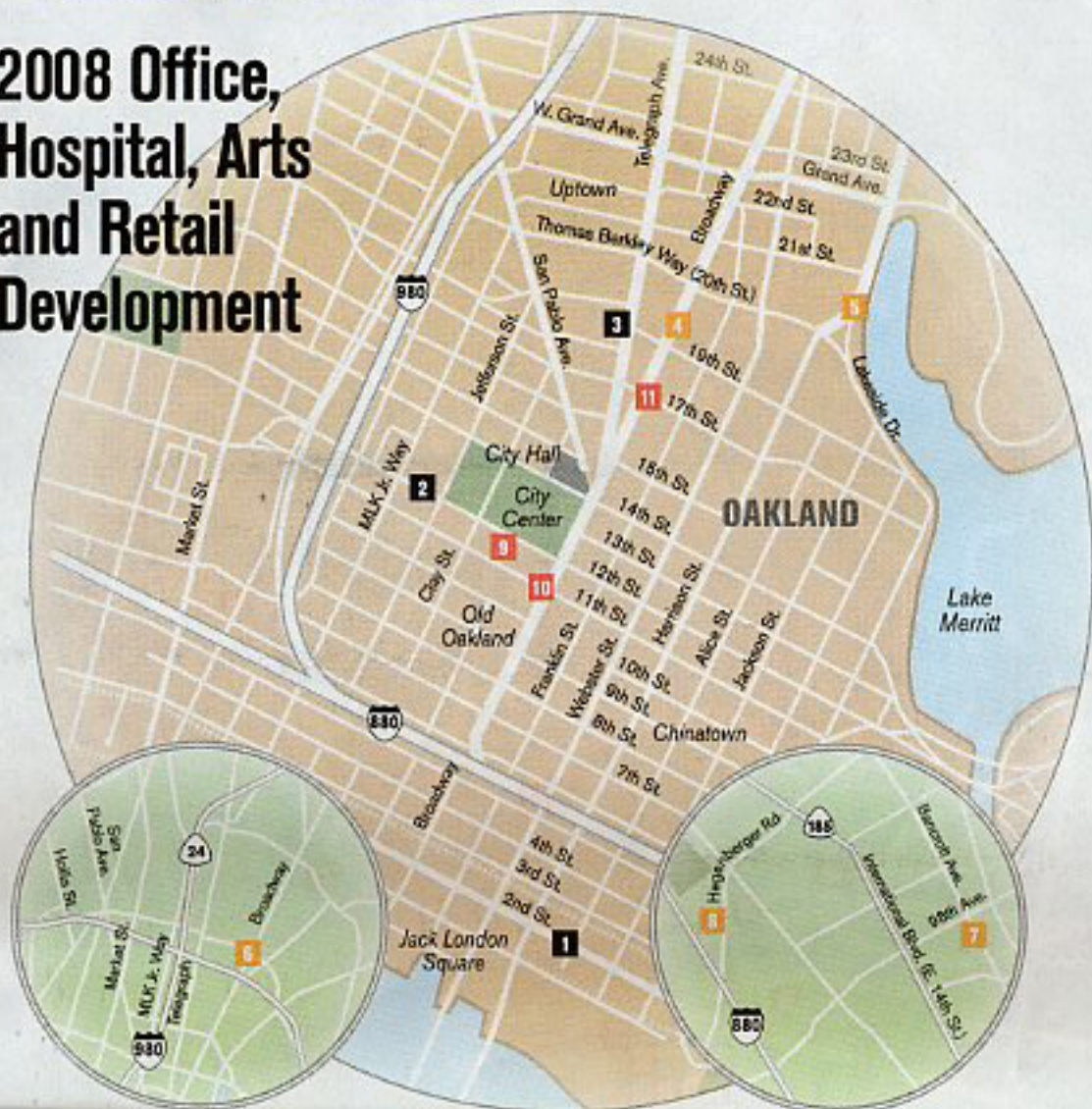
"We want people to buy these houses and do them up," Reggie Royston said.

Holliday's Cannery Lofts also need buyers. The developer considers the project the best he has built, but the one that has fared the worst in terms of sales.

"I'm still bullish on West Oakland," Holliday said. "The real estate business in general has been hit hard of late, so it's hard to look at any area with enthusiasm and optimism because the market has been challenged so much. If you put that aside, and think that there will be a stabilized market soon, West Oakland is as good as it gets."

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2008 Office, Hospital, Arts and Retail Development



PROJECT NAME	MAP CODE	DEVELOPER, LOCATION; DESCRIPTION
UNDER CONSTRUCTION		
Jack London Square Redevelopment	1	Jack London Square Partners Eight development areas within Jack London Square bounded by Alice, Second and Harrison Streets and Embarcadero; 1.2 million s.f. of mixed-use retail, commercial and office, 1,700 seat movie theater, 250-room hotel, supermarkets, restaurants and offices
City Center T12	2	Shorenstein Realty Investors; 601 12th St.; 600,000 s.f. office
Fox Theater	3	City of Oakland Redevelopment Agency 1807-1809 Telegraph Ave.; Rehabilitation of the historic theater, 20,000 s.f. addition
IN PLANNING		
1930 Broadway	4	Encinal Jackson LLC 1930 Broadway; 829,00 s.f. office space, 85,000 s.f. retail, 220 housing units, 384 parking spots in a 56-story new tower and rehabilitation of the Tapscott building
Kaiser Center	5	The Swig Co.; 300 Lakeside Drive; 760,000 s.f. office in 42-story tower, 565,000 s.f. office in 34-story tower, 22,000 s.f. retail
Kaiser Permanente	6	Kaiser Permanente; Broadway and MacArthur Boulevard; 348-bed hospital, two medical office buildings, parking structure
Foothill Square Redevelopment Project	7	Jay-Phares Corp. 10700 MacArthur Blvd.; Redevelopment of a 13.8-acre commercial shopping center
Coliseum Center	8	Dinesh Maniar 633 Hegenberger Road; Commercial shopping center of 167,000 s.f.
APPROVED		
City Center T5/T6	9	Shorenstein Realty Investors Bounded by 11th, 12th and Clay Streets and Broadway; 600,000 s.f. office, 7,500 s.f. commercial
1100 Broadway	10	SKS Investments; 1100 Broadway; 310,285 s.f. office, 9,610 s.f. retail
1640 Broadway	11	1640 Broadway Associates 1640 Broadway; 177,600 s.f. office, 4,710 s.f. retail