

What the Bayview community wants

Jackie Phillips, Eleanor Williams

Friday, May 30, 2008

We are members of ACORN and SFOP and part of the generation who were either born or settled in Bayview and brought up families there. Together with labor organizations, our community organizations have negotiated a legally binding agreement with the developer and the city for the future development of our neighborhood.

Eleanor moved as a child with her parents to the Bayview 56 years ago for better opportunities. After living with an aunt, her parents got a job and bought a home. Jackie was born in the Double Rock (now Alice Griffith) housing project 57 years ago, moved three times to different public housing projects, and hers was one of the first families to live in the Jackie Robinson Development. A jobs program led first to a living-wage union job and then to buying a home. We were some of the first black families in our neighborhood and have seen the neighborhood change from predominantly Italian to African American and now Latino and Chinese.

We were a community of neighbors who knew each other from gatherings at the mall on the hill, to stores that our parents shopped at on Third Street. There was a time when we felt safe in our community and had pride in our homeownership.

We had jobs. We had businesses owned by our neighbors. We had jobs programs that, after a year, guaranteed you a union job, the ability to buy a home, and a clear ladder up the salary scale. You felt safe and secure in an economy that connected families and the neighborhood.

Today, these hopes and dreams are still alive but not available. While there are jobs, there are few career job programs reaching our young people. Public funds that are supposed to develop job skills continue to be wasted, don't reach the people most in need and, although careers in downtown high rises are within view, they are inconceivably far away for our young people.

In terms of housing, young families in our community can either live at home, buy housing in other counties or earn less than minimum wage in order to be eligible for the kinds of "affordable" housing the city spends most of its money on. Members of our community want to start families, but the opportunity does not match that desire. Family-sized housing is not getting built - only studios and one bedroom units - and we are priced out of existing family-size housing.

Now, there is an opportunity for real economic development and opportunity to bring our neighborhood back up to standards we once enjoyed.

After two months of negotiating for our community, we have the city and a developer delivering essential opportunities for Bayview. Significant investment in our community will build family-sized housing.

Homeownership, and a \$17 million investment will create a model career ladder that will enable our families to buy homes.

We have an agreement that guarantees that our kids and grandkids can feel what we felt - pride in homeownership, pride in a real career and pride in their city. Together, we have an agreement around our original dream to start young people in jobs, to help them to participate and stay in their community and to make sure that when we see this project realized in five or 10 years, they will benefit. Our fight to make sure the people living here now can stay here is rooted in the work we do to make sure the Bayview residents are the only ones who have a true say over our community, not the city, the politicians or the developers.

We hope the dreams and the vision for the economic revitalization of our community doesn't get lost in the politics.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/05/30/EDMM1105H7.DTL>

This article appeared on page **B - 11** of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle Sections

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