Reimagining the San Francisco Waterfront: Industrial cargo hub, empty plot or thriving community? The Nature of Land Use Development

A Case Study of San Francisco’s Mission Bay

How sports in city building and the economic conditions of San Francisco allow for multi-billion dollar projects like the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center to be possible

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Introduction

San Francisco has always been a deeply desirable place to live. With fine weather, unique architecture, a vibrant economy, and neighborhoods that each have their own character there is a place for everyone in San Francisco. The city is loved by many for its great food, beautiful views, and diversity, but San Francisco holds a special place in my heart because it was the place I was born and raised. I take great pride in being a native San Franciscan. Through the years I lived here, San Francisco has transformed, grown and developed in many ways—renovated buildings, advancing neighborhoods, upgraded entertainment spaces. However, I would have to argue the most drastic changes in land use and the rehabilitation of historic city landmarks have taken place near and along the city’s waterfront.

San Francisco stands out compared to other cities because of its access to the water. It was this access to the water and the city’s connection to mining and the Gold Rush that made it an “instant city” in the 18th century. (Rubin) For just under 100 years, San Francisco was a thriving port that handled thousands of tons of cargo, but after its decline it stood desolate for some time before being transformed into a mixed use place of entertainment, consumption and residence. The length along the waterfront stretches over seven miles, so much can be said about the various
historical landmarks that reside along the shoreline. However, I will specifically be looking at the central waterfront at an area just south of China Basin Channel (or Mission Creek) known as Mission Bay. (Figure 1.1)

Mission Bay is a very unique San Francisco neighborhood. Different than any other in the city because of its mixed use buildings and housing diversity, Mission Bay has become a spectacle of San Francisco. A neighborhood that emerged late in the city’s history it has seen an immense amount of development in the last 20 years. (Figure1.2) For this reason, I will be doing a case study of Mission Bay, analyzing the area’s change through time and two of the neighborhoods proposed projects: The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center. These two sports team sponsored projects (by the San Francisco Giants and the Golden State Warriors) will have a drastic impact on Mission Bay as well as the city as a whole. These project have the potential to fully reconnect Mission Bay back to the rest of the city, the waterfront and bring new amenities, entertainment, art, leisure and an overall new living experience all in one place. But if differing ambitions not properly managed and planned as Chapter 2 reveals the impacts of both projects could be very detrimental. This article examines controversies around this land use, the role of sports in city building, the unfolding of these multi million dollar developments, and the economic logic/conditions that allow these development to take place. First, I will overview the projects, some of its elements and the ways in which developers plan to build on the land. Then a detailed accounts of the projects conception, politics and controversies surrounding the projects will follow in Chapter 2.
The Mission Rock Project

“We think [the Mission Rock Project] will bring new vitality to the neighborhood and finish Mission Bay to feel like a more authentic San Francisco Neighborhood.”

- Jack Blair, Giant’s Senior Vice President and General Counsel

The Mission Rock Project sponsored by the San Francisco Giants is a development that plans to transform the old industrial site just south of AT&T park currently parking lot A or Mission Rock into a thriving new community. The site of Mission Rock includes Pier 48, some of pier 50 and Seawall Lot 337.¹ (Figure 2.1) The project, on 28 acres of land, which has been approved and is currently in the design stages, aims to expand waterfront access, complete with a pier walkway, public open space, retail areas, residential and production facility for anchor brewery. Project designs include 1,500 new rental home units (40% of which would affordable), 8 acres of parks and waterfront open space, 1.5 million square feet of commercial space for shops, restaurants and cafes, office space, a 2,300 space parking garage and a revitalized Pier 48 to be home to Anchor Brewing. (Figure 2.2) City and project planners believe that this development will generate significant benefits for the city while enhancing the ballpark and the overall neighborhood experience.

¹ A seawall lot is the area of water between the seawall and adjacent embankment and the original shoreline that are filled in. Most property on the land side that is not a pier consists of seawall lots and roads. (Rubin, 23)
An aerial image of what the Mission Rock Project and the surrounding area will look like when the project is complete. (MLB)

Chase Center

"[Chase Center] an amazing array of amenities that will bring entertainment, quality of life and jobs to the surrounding area."

- *Rick Welt, President & COO, Golden State Warriors*

Chase Center is a multi purpose indoor arena soon to be the new home for the Golden State Warriors. Moving from Oakland to San Francisco the new arena is going be built on an 11 acre plot purchased from Salesforce.com\(^2\) in Mission Bay North on Block 29-32. (Figure 3.1) This 18,000 seat state of the art event space will be the anchor to this

\(^2\) The land purchased by the Warriors is technically Salesforce land. Back in 2010 Salesforce.com had planned to build out a 2 million square foot corporate campus on land they purchased for $278 million, but they change course and took lease on an existing financial district building. Salesforce still owned the land and sold it to the warriors.
new district that will also include 100,000 sq ft of retail space, 580,000 sq ft of office/lab space, a 35,000 sq ft public plaza and a five and a half acre public waterfront park.

(Figure 3.2) Set to open for the start of the 2019-20 NBA season the Warriors hope to bring new amenities that the neighborhood currently lacks.

An image of what Chase Center and the surrounding amenities will look like when complete. (CAC Presentation)

These projects are currently still in planning stages, but construction is set to begin within this next year. Both projects have struggled with city and public debate over certain design elements, however they are gaining momentum, with the passing of Proposition D

Proposition D was an initiative on the November 3, 2015 San Francisco voting ballot to allow the Mission Rock Project to moving forward in planning and development. The approval of prop D authorized the increase of building height limits to between 190 and 240 feet, which would help alleviate some of the housing availability issues faced by the city.
in November for the Mission Rock Project and the arena naming rights\(^4\) which took place in January. Mission Bay has already transformed enormously since is time as a decrepit rail yard, but even more change is going to take place when these two projects finally break ground.

Through close readings of project plans, maps and news media, I investigate the intersection of sports, nature and urban development and the ways in which the city’s prioritization of sports reinforces the “urban growth machine” (Logan, 1946). I explore how large scale plans for mixed used neighborhoods and arenas embody conflict about land use and urban development or in this case redevelopment. Both these project are elaborate and include more than just an arena or condos, they incorporate retail space, office space, public open areas and waterfront parks. They are creating an entire community experience for residence of the neighborhood, the city and visitors. In many ways, they want to improve the quality of life for San Franciscans through these projects, but this raises important questions about the city, sports, race, class, urban planning and environment. How has and are sports influencing San Francisco’s urban development? How will these projects affect the Mission Bay neighborhood? Will the building of more affordable housing in Mission Bay help alleviate San Francisco’s housing crisis? How are nature and public open space used to promote these projects? How are sports teams using their power and platforms to create projects for the “public good” and further their own interest?

Analyzing the significance of the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center on the Mission Bay community while articulating the deeply rooted position sports has on the

\(^4\) Naming deals usually occur much later in the construction process, but because the Warriors are privately financing the arena they wanted to strike an agreement sooner.
making of this neighborhood, I then consider the city’s overall objectives and the impact these projects. Reading the symbols alongside the economic/material factors that drive the projects, this paper illuminates how developers and sports team owners use images of nature and leisure to argue for their project, improve their brand and justify their profit seeking behaviors. In chapter 1, I will take us back in time, examining the history of the waterfront as a whole and Mission Bay in particular. Through a historical lens, I reveal the waterfront transformations that took place in the early 1850s and the 1970s, uncovering how the emergence of redevelopment along the waterfront and then at Mission Bay occurred. Chapter 2 will look at the role sports and city building more deeply, answering the questions of how sports has had power and influence over San Francisco planning, first with the San Francisco Giants Stadium⁵ and now The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center. Through my own reading of sports and urban development literature, analysis of project plans, and using the analytical framework of the urban growth machine I reveal how sports, class, urban planning and nature of San Francisco are both used and effected by these projects.

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⁵ Built in 2000 on the central waterfront in South Beach on the corner of Third and King. AT&T one of the only stadiums of its kind in all of baseball brought new life to the team, but even greater brought transformation and revival to the area.
Chapter 1

The San Francisco waterfront has drastically transformed through time. From active port, to desolate storage warehouses, to revitalized mixed use building, each section of the waterfront has changed and evolved in many ways. I will be focusing on the developments of The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center in Mission Bay because I will be examining the role sports plays in the urban growth of San Francisco. To understand these projects, how they came to be conceived and their current planning process, it is necessary to look back at the history of the waterfront as a whole to get the most complete picture. I will look at what came before, to understand what has come to be and what is coming to be. The current conditions have been greatly influenced by the past and not everything in the landscape is shown materially (Rubin). The stories of the San Francisco waterfront have been forgotten and without them, the making of these projects is incomplete. Today, the shipping and maritime related industry that once existed are nearly invisible and I aim to reveal the forgotten history of this now urban space to understand how the conditions to build along the San Francisco’s waterfront, specifically Seawall Lot 337, Pier 49, Pier50 and Mission Bay Block 29-32, were made possible.

I will examine the transformation of the San Francisco waterfront and Mission Bay from the Gold Rush to the turn of the 21st century, tracing the areas back to when they were bustling places of commerce to their current conditions as places best known for leisure and entertainment. There has been a shift in land use from production and industry to recreation and consumption. How and why this shift occurred is important to understanding why development at Mission Bay and the planning of these projects. The majority of past proposed projects were highly debated over, many failed and the ones that were successful
took years. Much of Mission Bay has already been built out and has and is becoming an integral part of the city’s identity. A glimpse at these past projects offers knowledge into the direction and planning practices of the current projects I am studying. In the following chapter, I first look back at the rise, fall and the beginnings of revitalization along the waterfront, followed by an investigation of how the actual lands of Mission Bay were created because despite images of how the area currently looks, it was previously an actual bay of water. I then analyze the city’s overall vision for the area by reading the Port of San Francisco’s waterfront design plan publications and considering what developments have already taken place. This reading will give me insight into why certain planning decisions by the project managers of the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center are being made and the ways in which these new developments will change the current environment.

**History of the Waterfront**

The waterfront and access to the water has played a huge role in why San Francisco is the thriving and innovative city it is today. This unique peninsula is the epicenter for culture, commerce, finance and growth. A city and county that is only 7X7 square miles, making it the smallest county in the whole state, has a rich history that dates back to the mid to late 1700s and the best tale to tell about San Francisco is through the lens and history of its waterfront.

San Francisco began as a port city. For 100 years, the seven and a half mile San Francisco Bay shoreline that stretches from Hyde Street Pier in the North to Indian Basin in the South was used for shipping and industry, but today the waterfront has been disguised and redefined by its attractions for entertainment and consumption.
The San Francisco waterfront is made up of finger piers, bulkhead buildings, docks, warehouses, marshaling yards, industrial structures and the recently redesigned embarcadero roadway. These structures function as the medium between water and land where cargo shipping, ship repairs, passengers terminals, maritime related activities, cruise ship moorings, commercial fishing facilities have resided. Under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco, they are responsible for upkeep and improvement for about 730 acres of property, piers, pier related structures, seawall lots and roads (Rubin, 23). These lands and structures are some of the most valuable real estate in the entire state and their uses through the decades have changed, transformed and been redeveloped at varying times and for varying reasons. So in order to gain clarity on the waterfront, I will conceptualize it in an ordered way (Rubin), breaking down the area based on chronology. First, I will look back in time, investigating its rise, considering the reasons for its decline, and then analyze the beginnings of revitalization, describing the current built environment and finally examine what is ahead.

Making Way for Industry

The story of the waterfront and its rise begins with Gold Rush in 1848. The Spanish, maritime traders and pioneers spent some time meandering along the seacoast early on, hunting, exchanging goods and exploring. But it was not until the Gold Rush that its importance and use completely changed. People from all over the world were attracted to the gold and San Francisco became the port of entry for the hundreds of ships bringing these people to the Bay. In just six years from the start of the Gold Rush the population grew from under 1,000 to 50,000 and by 1870 to 150,000 (Walker, 93). But population was not the only things that grew; culture, trade, commerce, industry, business and the economy
San Francisco became an “instant city,” a description that fits the port itself very well too. (Rubin, 39)

San Francisco pushed itself into the first rank of cities in the United States with its rapid development. However, the shoreline was haphazard and in very poor condition because of the lack of infrastructure necessary to handle all the cargo and shipping traffic it received. Docks, sheds and other building were falling apart and into the water having been built on the unstable muddy terrain of the shore. But in 1863, conditions began to improve when Governor Leland Stanford signed legislation that created the Board of State Harbor Commission, whose responsibility was to serve maritime commerce for the entire state and protect the waterfront from total private control (SFPort.com). They were in charge of up keeping and improving the city’s harbor. Thus, with this bill, the Port of San Francisco was born and the huge fight over money, power and political influence on the waterfront ended (Nolte, SFGate).

The commission’s first move to accommodate the increasing flow of shipping coming to and from the San Francisco port was to stabilize the shoreline. Thus the Embarcadero, a 12,000 foot long seawall, called a bulkhead, was built. Adding 800 acres to the city, residents who didn’t feel like the city was big enough got expansion and 18 miles of stable usable dock space was added. It took 46 years to build, but when construction finally concluded in 1924, the shoreline would be able to support the large amounts of shipping traffic it would soon see, it became leisurely side walk that accommodates walkers, runners and bikers that we see today. The Port became the international trading center for the West coast after stabilization and remained under State control until it was transferred to the City of San Francisco in 1969. (SFPort.com) San Francisco ahs redefined
the Port’s maritime marketing strategies and has established new uses for the previously industrial areas. Today the Port oversees a myriad of activities that take place along the water and it is due to their work that the City’s image as a diverse and cosmopolitan center of history, maritime activity, and leisure exists.

**Production to Consumption**

The waterfront in the 20th century and became an area of massive industry. San Francisco became the West Coast’s premier cargo port, moving thousands of tons of cargo a year. In 1900 alone six million tons of goods from around the world passed through the Port and that number would only sharply increase through the next 20 years (SFPort.com). The Port would also construct 23 piers along the waterfront to support the increase in shipping. Then during WWII the Port would become a major base for deployment. San Francisco was the principal point of departure for the Pacific Offensive. The time period of WWII created a flurry of activity for the port and helped it mature in many ways, but it was not able to return to activity levels like it has seen pre-war. There were multiple causes for its decline.

**Decline of the Port and The Beginnings of Revitalization**

The end of WWII was a key reason for its downturn, but there were a multitude of other external pressures reshaping the city that was affecting the waterfront. Ports thrive on the flow of goods, people and capital and in the 1950s there was a drastic change in the environmental condition causing major consequences for the port in the area of finance and technology (Rubin, 54). The economy brought in a new wave of investment to buildings and infrastructures around the port, indirectly hindered its ability to handle cargo. Then,
drastic changes to shipping technology caused by containerization, new ship
configurations, terminals, special cranes and storage space, would cause shipping to be
redirected to Oakland.

The Revolution of Containerization made container shipping the primary mode of
transporting goods and San Francisco lacked the infrastructure to support this method of
transporting goods. San Francisco’s finger piers were no longer economically viable for
this type of shipping nor did the city want to invest in building the structures necessary,
hampered the Port’s ability to handle cargo. In contrast, Oakland built container shipping
facilities that support new shipping technology, allowing them to soar ahead in tons of
cargo handled. Highways were also replacing shipping lanes, moving the flow of goods
from the coast into the interior. The increased use of roads allowed trucking to proliferate,
offering more flexible and cost efficient services. In addition, the Bay Bridge construction
completion drastically reduced ferry and ferry building use decreasing human traffic along
the water. These shifts in waterfront activity left the Port back at “square one” where it
started.

The combination of San Francisco operational issues, the state’s lack of interest and
use changes by a new urban economy, slowed cargo operations to a trickle (Rubin, 60).
Because of these factors, the port declined rapidly, leaving the waterfront behind to
deteriorate. Then, when it came time for redevelopment of waterfront structures, changes
happened much more slowly. In wasn’t until 1968 through the Burton Act, which
established the Port Commission to govern and transferred responsibilities for the San
Francisco waterfront back to the city from the State, that new changes happened and
formed. With the city now able to manage their waterfront they could now work to
restore/renew the waterfront and manage the area, ending decades of debate and issues around zoning restrictions and development plans. In addition, the McAteer- Petirs Act, a legal provision in California state law that prevented indiscriminate Bay fill, was enacted in 1965 establishing the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), a state agency that played a key role in the early development plans for the entire Bay Area, that were appropriate, environmentally sound and protected the Bay.

The Commission was in charge of drawing up plans for the long term use of the Bay and regulated development in and around the area. Their San Francisco Bay Plan, which designated areas for weather-related purposes like industry, public recreation, wildlife refuges and ports, was approved in 1968 and since then, with the BCDC’s stewardship, the size of the Bay has increased significantly (BCDC.gov). The work of the BCDC in combination with the Port allowed for conditions to development and the city could now move forward with their desires to commercially develop, to increase jobs, payrolls and increase revenues that stem from the port they would start with Fisherman’s Wharf and Pier 39.

Fisherman’s Wharf transformed from a place of work into a place of tourism and commercial activity. The conversion of Fisherman’s Wharf and Pier 39 was the first major transformation and it was a very important one because it was the first successful reuses of Pier space. It gave waterfront access, included retail and a plaza much like what the projects at Mission Bay will include. It will be a mixed use area whose goal is to draw in new traffic and become a more desired destination to be visited by tourists. Though this project was highly agreed upon, most other developments did not have the public reaction and agreement. Early attempts to promote new uses for waterfront real estate were highly
debated, did not make it past the proposal stage and often failed. Renewal of the land after the opening of Fisherman’s Wharf in 1978 was slow with no major changes until the 1990s.

**Reimagining the Waterfront**

Sweeping views of the water, majestic sights of the Bay Bridge and renewed pier spaces now characterize San Francisco’s waterfront and draw thousands to the city’s edge. However, for decades, the waterfront had been completely separated from the rest of the city. The waterfront was shut off due to various reasons, but largely because of the elevated freeway that acted as a physical barrier in sight and access. Parking, crumbling piers, keep out signs and work sites made it difficult to get to the water. But after years of failed projects and decay, San Francisco was finally ready for change in the 1990s, made possible through local conditions and planning culture and new appreciation for nature.

The 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake was a monumental event that has had a huge role in the Embarcadero’s current condition. The Embarcadero freeway, built in the 60s, was severely damaged in the earthquake. It so damaged that it would not be able to be just repaired, but would have to be completely rebuilt, giving the city and its residents the opportunity to rethink the waterfront’s connection to the city. Both the city and residents wanted
the freeway removed and replaced with a different transportation surface and they prevailed. In 1991, the Embarcadero Freeway, that formally blocked the sweeping views of the bay, was demolished. Light and a new sense of open space allowed for possibilities to build and brighten the city’s historic waterfront, an defining moment for the future of the waterfront. (Karlinsky, Urbanist)

   Designs for the new Embarcadero would take place and a ten year planning effort that involved substantial community input, committee advising and work with consultants would begin. The city believed that commercial development would be important, but not in the way it had always been talked about in the sense of supporting shipping and maritime development. Instead, commercial development would be used to bring people to the water, especially through shopping, entertainment, and creation and to finance maintenance of piers and other facilities (Mayor Jordan, Former SF Mayor).

   They would envision a completed transformed waterfront. One with a tree lined boulevard, a waterside promenade that allowed for bicycles, pedestrians, an extension of MUNI light rail system and more. All projects and visions revolved around the goal of reuniting the city to the waterfront to benefit the public, but the city realized that it needed its own clear policy statement, detailed vision of land use and consensus among competing local interest and the people that everyone could refer to. Thus, the Port of San Francisco published The Waterfront Land Use Plan (WLUP).

   Waterfront Land Use Plan

   The Waterfront Land Use Plan (WLUP) was adopted by the Port Commission in 1997. The plan defines acceptable uses, politics and land use information for all properties overseen by the Commission. It lays out the waterfront and defines locations for new
public-private partnership, public open space, maritime and historic preservation improvements. The Port Commission, the city and the community jointly came together to define these terms, guidelines and uses. It has ushered in new planning policies and regulations.

The WLUP is the publication guiding revitalization along the waterfront. It promises to create new public access, entertainment, more open space and expand maritime activity. “The plan does more than invite development, it instead focuses on establishing the waterfront as a civic space, serving a broadly identified societal need,” which is already visible with the UCSF medical development at Mission Bay, public parks along Mission Creek, inclusive housing developments and proposed projects like the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center (Rubin, 257). Leading us to today and what currently sits on the land. The projects I look at are still in the planning stages so it is important I assess the overall objectives of the Waterfront Land Use Plan for South Beach/China Basin and evaluate the recent developments at Mission Bay first to understand the developers vision for the neighborhood. (Figure 4) The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center will essentially be the final developments finishing off the area because most projects have already been completed or are under construction. The planning and unfolding of these projects because of their impact and the role sports is playing in them are going to be even more magnified and under scrutiny by the public.

Through the establishment of the Port of San Francisco, Waterfront Land Use Plan and the ways in which the waterfront have been reimaged it is clear that the city is privileging sports and recreation over building more industrial piers. Historical conditions like the Revolution of Containerization and advancements in technology made the
waterfront less effective for shipping, but through people’s growing desire for leisure and strengthened psychological ties to sports the shift to recreation as a form of economic development on the water occurred. Historically, across the US, sports and stadium building have been used as a catalyst to transform cities and we see the same thing happening in San Francisco. The city is using sports and recreation as an object for urban development, revitalization and growth and a mechanism to reconnect Mission Bay to the rest of the city.

**The Makings of Mission Bay**

The waterfront is broken up into five subareas by the port: Fisherman’s wharf, the northeastern waterfront, Ferry Building waterfront, Central waterfront (which encompasses south beach and china basin), and the southern waterfront. In this section, I will explore the central waterfront, closely investigating the makings of Mission Bay where the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center will soon be breaking ground.

The Central waterfront is a vibrant mixed-used residential and commercial neighborhood. The WLUP’s objective for the area is to enliven the waterfront and attract more visitors from downtown to the rest of the city. To do this, they want to promote and provide a broader range of public oriented activities while also serving the area’s resident population ( WLUP). Thus, the reason why Mission Bay is now dominated by

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6 Each of these areas under the San Francisco Planning Department has their own area plan published in 1990. The area designated as Mission Bay in 1990 Central Waterfront Area Plan has since been designated as two separate Redevelopment Project Area: Mission Bay North and Mission Bay South and are now governed by their respective Development Plans.
developments that embody and combine mixed income housing, retail, public access to the water, parks, entertainment and office space all in one area.

Mission Bay is an attractive, connective and recreational recently developed neighborhood in San Francisco located on the central waterfront is just south of The Lefty O’ Doul bridge at 3rd street that runs over the China Basin channel. (Figure 5) The 303 acre Mission Bay Project headed by the University of San Francisco is where current large scale development activity along the waterfront is taking place, just 150 years ago, Mission Bay was nothing more than a salt marsh with abundant marine life, shorebirds and wild mammals. Development here seems to be occurring later than the rest of the waterfront, but this is because land at Mission Bay came late in the first place.

The history of Mission Bay is one that revolves around the gradual filling-in of a San Francisco cove. The land on which everything at Mission Bay is currently built is fill. Fill made up of city’s unwanted sandhills, rubble, concrete and dirt. The salt marshes, mudflats and estuaries were bridged over, planked, paved and filled eventually extending into the San Francisco Bay and all the way to engulf Mission Rock7, which is where The Mission Rock Project will be built (hence the name of the development). The physical changing of the land is a complex because it was a combination of court decisions, legislative actions, planners visions and speculator schemes that made it possible.

(Olmstead, vii)

7 Before the Mission Rock Area was connected to Pier 50 it was legitimately just a rock. The rock was a very convenient anchoring point off the bay so it began growing and warehouses were eventually constructed on it. In the 1920s the rock was converted into a shipping terminal and industrial site with facilities for commerce and then later it was connected
Very early on, the clam lagoon and marsh land of Mission Bay with an abundance of plants and wild life was inhabited by Coast People, a tribe of California Indians. Spanish soldiers and Franciscan padres came exploring the land through the early 1800s disturbing the life the Native Americans were living, but things really began to change at the start of the Gold Rush. Just as the Port of San Francisco saw increased activity during this period, so did Mission Bay with the building of Mission Plank toll road and a marine railway from Steamboat Point into the Bay to haul up ships for repair. (Olmsted,13) Steamboat Point was important because it was here that ships, the carrier of all the city’s trade, were repaired and built. It was also the site boundary at which early plans, extensions and improvements for water lots took place. Though these activity are much more small compared to those of the port they are still very important in the way that they did influenced the entire future development of Mission Bay. For it was here that early dreams of development for the area began to form.
1859 US Coastal Survey Map of Mission Bay prior to being filled in and Mission Rock out in the Bay

The mid-late 1800s was when the water of Mission Bay starting to become land. Mission Bay which is made of 80% fill started to take shape during the 1870s. (SFOCII) An attractive and convenient place to dump undesirable and unwanted materials, sand and dirt from Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Street, garbage dumps from along Seventh and Eighth street and debris from the 1906 earthquake (Olmsted, 34). The weight of the infill quickly stabilized the marsh preparing it to become a district ready for industry and now a place for development that we are seeing today.

*Past: Rising from the “industrial wasteland”*

“From its conception in 1981, Mission Bay was regarded as the economic engine that would drive San Francisco into the 21st century”

- Dan Levy, SF Chronicle Staff Writer

Shortly after the Bay was completely filled, the railroad companies acquired the land to use for railroads. The railroads thrived or sometime, but by the 1970s all previous activities ceased due to shipping and industrial activity decline. Left behind were underutilized railyards, so the Santa Fe Pacific Reality, an offshoot of the railroad took over in hopes of redeveloping. Developers, city officials and residents wanted transformation for the area. Several plans for reuse of the property were proposed starting in 1981, but building heights, residential percentages could not be decided upon. Fierce debates between high powered- business interested, environmental critics and neighborhoods coalitions took place. Mission Bay was the subject of the most intense
development fight in town, exemplified through the fact that its planning passed through the hands of four mayors, three planning directors, and numerous corporate firms. (Prowler, Spur) But, finally in 1994 when Catellus Development Corporation, the subunit of Southern Pacific and the company who handled non-railroad business at the time took over, that development began to take place. Then the 1991 recession that hit, tanking all prior plans were behind and Mission Bay, the site that developers dreamed about because of its simple development pathway for residential and commercial projects compared to other neighborhoods, was finally ready to see action.

All of Mission Bay would be re-envisioned into a biotech utopia with mixed science research facilities and a hospital when politically connected Nelson Rising joined Catellus in 1994. The University of California San Francisco was be brought on board because they were quickly outgrowing their cramped hilltop in the middle of town and Mission Bay, a place with little development and the availability of space for biotech and technology companies as well as residential condos and apartments, would provide the perfect place for them to expand. With a newly extended light rail line that connected the area to downtown and easy access to research firms in South San Francisco, Mission Bay was the ideal new home for UCSF. With the help of Mayor Willie Brown who spearheaded an effort to get the site developed, the city would give UCSF 13 acres and Catellus 30 acres to help UCSF on their journey to create a center for biotechnology—making UCSF the spark that would ignited development in the whole area.

In 1998, entire redevelopment plans for the North Plan Area and the South Plan Area of Mission Bay would be published, establishing residential, commercial and open space land use districts. (SFOCII) Detailed height, bulk, parking, street frontage, along with
design guidelines would also be dictated. The city desired Mission Bay to be a site of mixed housing types, a place for UCSF to growth in San Francisco and lead in the way of a new system of parks and other amenities and these detailed planned written by the San Francisco Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure would guide developers to build this San Francisco neighborhood to do just that. It is these visions and plans that are guiding the building of the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center.

Present: San Francisco’s Newest Neighborhood

The vacant rail yards of Mission Bay have ahead been remade into housing, offices, commercial and retail space an another proposed arena. Maritime activities like ferry maintenance center, welding facilities, harbor services, and storage units just to name a few are still active here, but the area has been utterly transformed in the area of leisure activity and entertainment offered here. We now see a vibrant mixed use residential and commercial neighborhoods, gleaming condos, tall biotech and office buildings, long elaborate landscapes, fresh green grass, newly planted tress, and wide walk ways.

UCSF opened its first Mission Bay building in 2003 and launch an extensive plan to build a giant hospital and research complex which has since been built out. Cutting edge science campus seeking cures for diseases have been built, large pharmaceutical companies like Bayer and Pfizer have established offices and the UCSF Medical Center has opened a $1.5 billion, 878,000-square-foot, 289-bed hospital devoted to women, children and cancer patients. Other residential buildings like Mercy8, a completely affordable housing building

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8 Mercy Housing Development on 4th street features 99 affordable rental homes for low income families and 50 affordable units for formerly homeless households. It includes numerous amenities such as a large community room open during weekdays
has opened and units of the numerous recently finished housing complexes are currently being moved into.

The area is the home to new biotech firms, tidy landscaping, condos and parks. However, the new improvements still sit along side fenced off bay access, bits of rotting pier falling into the bay and piles of rubble and weeds. The many improvements and developments that have been completed represent already successful land reuses and what is to come for this former industrial district when everything is complete. (SFPort) The vision of Mission Bay being a mixed use, transit oriented development neighborhood is coming to life and the building of Chase Center and the Mission Rock Project will further advance and complete what the city wants for the area.

**Conclusion: The Future of Mission Bay**

Mission Bay redevelopment is well on its way and it is already becoming one of San Francisco’s most appealing neighborhoods. Over 30 years in the making, The Mission Bay Project, now managed by the Mission Bay Development Group⁹, will include 6,400 residential units (40% affordable), a 3.15 million square foot UCSF research campus and hospital, 285,000 square feet of retail space, 3.4 million Square feet of commercial office and biotech la space, a 250 room hotel, 49 acres of public open space and a new school, for after school programs, an exercise room, landscaped outdoor spaces and much more.

⁹ Catellus decided to get out of the residential real estate business and sold its Mission Bay holdings to Farallon Capital management. Farallon then created a new entity, FOCIL-MB, who is now the master developer responsible for installing infrastructure. Focil now pays the Mission Bay Development to manage and run the project.
police and fire station and library, and more when completed. A large amount of the residential development, commercial development, and the UCSF campus is completed or under way, which brings us to what is left in the area of development for Mission Bay—The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center.

In chapter 2 I will look at the projects in more detail, investigating their conception and the politics of the land use, and nature. These projects are so unique because they involve so many elements. It isn’t just a single housing development or a single arena. The projects included, retail, office space, public parks, waterfront access, vast open spaces and more. I unravel the complexities through exploring past literature on sports and city building, applying the model of the urban growth machine, dissecting project plans and images, reviewing debates and controversies by city and environmental activists. Through my studies I aim to uncover how the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center will effect San Francisco. I present the power of sports in social and economic city development and reveal how sports teams, developers and planners frame their projects using images of nature and leisure to further their brands and profit seeking behaviors, which reinforce the city as a “growth machine.”
Figure 1.1 The neighborhood of study
Figure 1.2 Zoning and planned development per block in Mission Bay (OCII)
Figure 2.1 Geographic map location of The Mission Rock Project

Figure 2: Development Plans of the Mission Rock Project
Figure 3.1 Geographic site of the proposed warriors stadium

Figure 3.2 Development Plans for Chase Center and surrounding amenities (CAC Presentation)
Figure 4 Waterfront Land Use Plan South Beach/ China Basin Waterfront Subarea Diagram (WLUP)

Figure 5: The site of Mission Bay
Chapter 2

The newly emerging San Francisco Mission Bay neighborhood is changing the city’s landscape, creating what its developers call a new style of urban living and pushing the envelope of how space can be used. This small peninsula on the central waterfront of San Francisco is changing the conversation around housing, mixed-use spaces, and sports. In 1990, Mission Bay, a previously neglected area of industrial warehouses, was designated for developed after The University of California at San Francisco came on board in partnership with the city. The development plans and how the area has been built out have completely reshaped how the local neighborhood looks and operates. It is not rows of identical houses or areas of all-low income housing, but blocks of diverse housing intertwined with retail, access to new recreation along the water and natural open space. While the rest of the city is filled with concrete high-rises, Mission Bay is surrounded by nature. The neighborhood has been reimagined through an indoor-outdoor living style motivated through desires to reconnect with the water, an integral part of San Francisco’s identity.

The Mission Bay neighborhood has become a full and all encompassing living experience since the approval of Mission Bay Redevelopment Plans in 1998\(^{10}\). Over the next 17 years, construction took place shaping Mission Bay to include biotech, medicine, offices, green packs, scenic waterfronts walkways, a lively street scene of restaurants, cafes, bars and shopping, a baseball park, housing at market price and low income and soon to be another sporting arena/event center. The neighborhood seems to have it all,

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\(^{10}\) Development in the Mission Bay North and South areas are controlled through the Redevelopment plans the San Francisco Board of Supervisors established in November 1998.
integrating living, nature, leisure, and work in one place. However, with the intersection of all these varying objects, there is much to be explored as the neighborhood still has opportunity to grow as depicted in the image below. Most of UCSF’s campus has been built out, but there are still acres of undeveloped land most notably in Mission Bay South and these are the areas where conflict live. Much has be written about the development of the Mission Bay neighborhood through news media, but what is less understood is how this recently emergent neighborhood and the new projects set to be built there fit in with earlier scholarly debates like the theory of urban growth machine (Logan & Moltch, 1946), the increasing influence of higher education, the San Francisco housing crisis, and growing desire to have open civic spaces.

An aerial view of how Mission Bay has been built out to date. UCSF (one the lower left) is well established, while other areas like SWL 337 (on the upper right by the water) still looks to be developed. (qb3.org)

Using these ideas, I explore the role sports and city building in Mission Bay. I investigate sports as a catalyst for transformation, place as a commodity and the city as a
growth machine/business. The power and position of sports in urban development and its intersection with politics and place have generated complex development projects nationally. I use Logan and Moltch’s focus on the commodification of place and the conflict between use and exchange value in urban growth as a framework to examine the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center developments. In other words, I use an urban growth machine framework (Logan and Moltch, 1946) as an interruptive lenses to make sense of the interconnectedness of sport and politics, the positions of sports in San Francisco urban development, and the contradictions of using sports in bring growth and “public good” when analyzing land use projects in Mission Bay.

In the urban growth machine model there are two forces at work: “exchange value” and “use value.” There are those who make their money off the land and buildings (exchange value) and then those who utilize the land and buildings in their daily lives (use value) (Logan & Molotch, 1946). Those who purse exchange values, like entrepreneurs and developers seek nothing but profits and revenue from the land. They see place as nothing more than a commodity that is bought, sold and rented, while residents who seek use value, want a place to live and see place as satisfying the necessities of life. In the city, there is a push for both these goals, but striving for both is inherently contradictory and it is this mechanism that creates continued tension. However, despite the conflict “growth” is always agreed upon, which is the idea of the city as a “growth machine.”

In growth-driven cities like San Francisco, there is always a longing for more. The Mission Rock Project and Chase Center developments show how professional sports are one of the entities that serve in sustaining this growth ideology. These two projects are both proposed to be built in San Francisco’s Mission Bay Neighborhood. Though they differ in
many of the ways in which they have been planned, “any development on the ground, private or public, large or small, distributes value of both types, [use and exchange],” write Logan and Molotch (ix). Therefore, I use this analytical framework of the urban growth machine to uncover the conflict of use and exchange value that lay at the foundation these projects. By using the idea of the urban growth machine, I am able to establish what is being prioritized, use or exchange value, in these big development projects, understand the position of sports in the city and analyze how cities are built through who is getting to decide what is valued.

This chapter looks at a brief history of sports and city building and how sports became a transformative tool that cities use to create land use and urban change. I analyze the stadium history of San Francisco and how sports has influenced the making of the city’s urban landscape. I answers questions about why sports have the power to create such large-scale projects and how cities continue to use sports in urban politics. Through close reading project design plans, city documents and media coverage and considering the fundamental attributes of buildings and land in the social context through which they are used and exchanged, I learn how developers negotiate nature, public open spaces and leisure to plan their projects. I examine how Mission Bay has already been built out, what their objectives for the neighborhood and projects are and some people’s concerns. Through dissecting the intersection of city politics within the projects using the urban growth machine framework, comparing the differences between public verse private land and addressing the controversies in the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center, I reveal how sports teams and the city use nature, class, the nostalgia of past projects to further their own motives and profit seek behaviors.
Sports and City Building

Sports command attention. They have their own channels on television, have their own sections in newspapers, news stations devote about 20% of airtime to covering sports news and all around the world attendance, participation and enthusiasm for sports is growing (Campbell, 1999). Sports are an intertwined part of our society. They influence the economy, people’s identities and how cities are developing and growing. This impact raises important questions about how sports have come to earn this role, why people care so much about sports and why so many believe sports infrastructure will transform cities and increase urban development. This section will answer these questions, so we understand how sports teams have gained dominance over city planning, and why the Giants and Warriors are able to build billion dollar projects.

Sport holds a special place in American society because they instill a sense of place and attachment among people in a community. This symbolic representation of place provides a social focal point for diverse groups of people making sports “important to the cultural thread in the fabric in society.” However, the social importance of sports is far disproportionate to their importance to the urban economy. Billions of taxpayer subsidies have been spent on major league stadiums with the rationale that investing in sports facilities would bring economic impact and positive spillover to the city, but research shows that stadiums produce revenues insufficient to cover their costs (Okner, 1974).

Sports and stadium building in urban American are intimately connected with the process of urban development. The city is where “sport became rationalized, specialized, organized, commercialized, and professionalized” thus the history of sport and city growth cannot be separated (Riess, 1989). We cannot talk about urban city politics and place
without thinking about sports and visa versa. So, in order to analyze current sports team sponsored developments and stadium development impacts, or sports investments, in San Francisco we must also examine the broader context in which sports is positioned in the larger sports and city building literature framework. A deeper look into not just the economic, but psychological power of sports will give insight into how sports team make these billion dollar projects a reality.

**History of Sports and US city building**

The history of sports in urban American started just over 100 years ago and is intimately connected with the process of urban development (Campbell, 1999). “It is a mutually transformative relationship between sports and the growth of American cities during the 19th and early 20th centuries” (Karp and Yoels, 1990). Urbanization and industrialization promoted the rise of professional sports, while sports helped foster the growth of industrial cities by stimulating the emergence of values around work as well as leisure. Prior to the 1930’s, the business of sports was private—private money for financing and private stadiums and arenas to play in. But when the Great Depression and WWII struck the nation, teams were unable to refurbish their fields that were already in desperate need of renovation. These stadium conditions were directly parallel to that of the San Francisco waterfront. Similar to US stadiums, the waterfront was in need of revitalization as well. The 1950s was when the advent of publically funded stadiums commenced, as well as the beginnings of revival of the waterfront as well which we learned in chapter 1.

Municipally financed and publically built stadium transformations began with the Braves in 1953, the Browns in 1954, the Athletics in 1955 and then the Giants in 1960 whom moved from the Polo Fields of New York to their new stadium, Candlestick park in
San Francisco (Danielson, 1997). The building of these team’s facilities by the public sector set in motion a trend of major league facilities funded by public subsidies. Most facilities had been built in the 1960s and 70s, so by the mid 1990s facilities were aging once again. Teams claimed that without enhancements to their stadiums their teams would suffer and most franchises were not willing to incur the huge costs of constructions. Teams threatened relocation if new facilities were not developed, so the public sector got involved again (Campbell).

For decades, teams have used economic arguments to justify the use of public subsidies, but time and time again it is found that there is no evidence to prove that stadiums have a significant impact on a region's economic growth (Baim, 1990, Quirk & Fort 1992, Baade, 1994, Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2006). Yet cities continue to make stadiums the centerpiece for transformation because sports resonates with people. Sports teams and their stadiums are icons on the urban landscape and represent the primary connection between teams, the cities in which they play and themselves. Therefore, although research shows that stadiums bring little return, sports continues to be used as a lever to enact change and growth. The economic justification may be losing its luster, but cities, teams and developers are now using the intangible benefits that underpin sports to promote their projects—the social, emotional, spatial and nostalgic ties people have to professional sports. So when teams seek to build a new facility or mixed-use spaces, they depend on the psychological ties people have with sports to grow their cities through stadium building. This model of sports and stadium as an economic growth engines is evident in San Francisco.
Stadium History of San Francisco

Sports stadiums have contributed to shaping San Francisco’s urban landscape. The history of sports arenas in the city seems to be a circle that dates back to the Gold Rush era. In the last 150 years, stadiums have come and gone and there have been over 18 stadiums and arenas in San Francisco that have hosted pro, minor league or collegiate competitions (Hartlaub, SFGate). In the late 1860s the city was growing and residents wanted a ballpark/recreation space, so San Francisco built its first 12,000 seat professional baseball park, The Recreation Ground, in the Mission District for high level baseball and athletic events (Bevk, Curbed SF). It was a beloved ballpark that operated for just under 20 years and in the years to follow the city would see the building of numerous other stadiums—Central Park in 1884, Seal Stadium in 1931, Candlestick Park in 1960 and then Kezar Stadium in 1990, just to name a few. All but one remain (Kezar Stadium). However, it seems that when one comes down another goes up, which is part of the circle of San Francisco arena life that we are seeing. AT&T opened along the central waterfront in 2000, Candlestick was recently demolished in 2015 and now a new Warriors basketball arena in Mission Bay is in the works. Sports has been big part of the San Francisco’s urban development history and it is evident that it continues to be a subject of heavy debate in the city’s urban politics with the building of Chase Center and Giants sponsored Mission Rock Project.

The San Francisco Giants

Early years of Giants Baseball in San Francisco

Baseball has been America’s favorite pastime and long been a favorite of San Francisco’s as well. The San Francisco Giants originally known as the New York
Gotham’s moved to San Francisco in 1958. One of the longest-established baseball teams in all of Major League Baseball the Giants successes throughout history and more recently, they won three of the last six World Series Championships in 2010, 2012, and 2014 have bolstered their brand and presence around the country. Their achievements on the field not only increase their significance as a baseball team, but grows their influence as an entity heavily involved in urban politics and development in the city.

Following their moved to San Francisco, they played their first two seasons at Seal Stadium and then moved to Candlestick Park where they played for over three decades. Notorious for its windy conditions, the team was losing money at Candlestick so Bob Lurie, owner at the time, began planning for a new baseball stadium (ballparksofbaseball.com). After multiple rejected ballot measures in multiple Bay Area cities and rejected referendums to finance construction of a new stadium, the future of the Giants in San Francisco was looking grim. However, in 1993, Peter Magowan bought the Giants and two years later announced plans to build a privately financed ball park in downtown San Francisco.

Historically, San Francisco has always been difficult place to build stadiums because of a dysfunctional City Hall. When AT&T finally opened in 2000, the urban landscape of the city would never be the same (Hartlaub, SFGate). AT&T would become the centerpiece of the area. It was a physical and functional masterpiece of San Francisco that transformed the South Beach neighborhood and prefigured the current stadium projects. The Giants’ role in helping transform the neighborhood would elevate the team’s brand and strengthen sporting bonds among the city’s fans. The building of AT&T would
just be the beginning of revitalization along the waterfront and as we saw in chapter 1, other waterfront structures along the Embarcadero would see transformation as well.

The Giant sparked new life in South Beach with AT&T and are continuing to further lead the charge to improve and reconnect Mission Bay, a long neglected part of the city, to the rest of San Francisco. They changed one side of the waterfront with AT&T and are trying to take it even further and do the same on the other on the water in Mission Bay with their sponsorship of the Mission Rock Development. Mission Bay has been disconnected from the rest of the city for decades and the team’s hope with this project is to covert the barren Giants parking lot into the “heartbeat of Mission Bay” that will link the burgeoning neighborhood back to the rest of the city. (Bair, SF Giants Senior VP)

A birds eye view of SWL 337, the current Giants parking lot that is set to be transformed into the Mission Rock Project, a mixed-use development that planners hope will become the “heartbeat of Mission Bay” (MLB).

This section examines the public-private partnership between the city and the Giants for this project. The pursuit of exchange and use value between these two groups drive the making of the Mission Rock Project and how it is built out. The parks, waterfront
access, open spaces and vast lawns planned to be a part of the development are more than natural open spaces for the purpose of beauty. I explore this intersection of nature and place and its symbolism to the development and people. The team, planners and the city hope to bring more vibrancy, entertainment, and fun to the “office oriented Mission Bay” with this project (Whildermuth, SFGate). Ultimately, the purpose of this project is economic growth, and leisure and open space contributes to the team’s economic bottom-line. On paper the Mission Rock initiative represents an unprecedented amount of public housing, vast open space, and vibrant activity. I evaluate whether this “growth” is the kind of growth that is really furthering our city and the kind of city we should support.

The Mission Rock Initiative

Public-Private Partnership

The $1.6 billion Mission Rock Project is a highly complex project between the Giants and the Port of San Francisco and their public-private partnership have generates tension. The project itself is sponsored by the Giants (private), but it is going to sit on land that is controlled by the Port (public). The Giants may be the “sponsor” privately funding it all, but as a development the Port of San Francisco is driving the development and thus has a huge role in decision making and the scope of the development. Though they are working together and have some common goals like increasing access to the waterfront, drawing more people, residents and visitors, to Mission Bay and growth in general, the deeper conflicting interests of the city and team that affect use and exchange values lay at the center of this projects’ development process. The team and their entrepreneurs helping finance the project seek to create development for that site that will produce high rents and attract visitors (exchange value), while the city seeks to create a real neighborhood that
supports their residents (use value). However, as I will explain below the city is very much driven by capital gain in the project and the attraction of this capital is very much controlled by the Giants and their investors.

*Tensions over Land*

The struggle begins with the actual land of Seawall lot 337 (SWL 337) where the Mission Rock Project will be built because all land already comes with a set of interests tied to it (Logan, 1947). The land itself is a large public trust property, zoned over two decades ago for open space. SWL 337 is currently used as a parking lot under lease to the San Francisco Giants. In May 2009 the Port Commission awarded the 16 acre plot development opportunity to SWL 337 LLC, authorizing exclusive negotiations for a mixed use development project on the site. (SFP) When rights to build on SWL 337 were finally earned, many companies proposed ideas and put in offers, but the Port ultimately selected the Giants as their partner. Not only did the Giants have a mature proposal on how to develop the area, but they knew the team was in it for the long term. Unlike typical developers, the Giants were not just going to build, flip and move on. The Giants have stakes in the land with their ballpark just across the water.

Similar to the Giants, the stakes are high in this project for the Port as well. The Port is an enterprise department, which means they are self sustaining entity. Any money they need to upkeep piers or the land they control needs to be self-generated. According Port of San Francisco Waterfront Plan Update: Port Budget and Financial Review, the port is in a huge capital shortfall of 1.6 billion and is in dire need to generate revenue. This fact lies at the root of the Port’s motives for development like the Mission Rock Project. The Giants estimate that the Mission Rock Project will generate up to 900 million in additional
property tax revenue for the Port and city over their 75-year lease with the Port. Another 13 million a year will be made in sales taxes once the project is complete (Wildermuth, SFGate). This is a hefty increase to 2.4 million a year the giants currently pay the Port to use SWL 337 as a parking lot for the ballpark. 11

Playing with politics, public housing and nature

The Mission Rock Project planning is heavily influenced by the physical make-up of the neighborhood and topographical configuration, but it is equally shaped by the positions of political, economic and cultural organizations. The Mission Rock project is a community initiative that has involved eight years of neighborhood outreach and community planning (Missionrock.org). The private Giants Ball Club and the public Port of San Francisco have worked together to build a vision for the development and how they want the neighborhood to look, but the planning process has not been easy nor its it over. Both sides dream of transforming the 28 acres parking lot into a mixed-use neighborhood that will be an “asset for the community,” but with differing motives driving each side tension have risen.

Prior to the Mission Rock Project’s planning process, the city had already zoned and planned out very block in Mission Bay (Figure 6). Mission Bay Redevelopment Plans spelled out their goals and policies for Mission Bay (ie: building height limitations), therefore when the Giants wanted to increase building height from the formally agreed on limits of 105 feet to between 190-240 feet, they had to go to the ballot to get it approved by

11 Beyond the Mission Rock Project, this is also why the waterfront has seen so much development, transformation and revitalization in the past 10 years as explained in chapter 1. The Port is allowing developers to build on lands all along the waterfront that they control because these projects deliver badly needed revenue.
voters. The ballot measure, Prop D, won with a 74% yes vote, so three towers are now allowed to go up, however this is just an approval on the projects size (ballotpedia.org).

(Figure 6.1)

Specific designs still need to be approved by the Port Commission and they need about a year to complete and get the environmental impact reports approved. Regardless, the passage of Prop. D was a big win for the Giants because higher buildings mean high exchange values. Taller buildings produce better views for those who have access to Mission Rock offices and residences, which means the ability to charge higher rents. This image below shows what the Mission Rock neighborhood will look like with the towers that were approved through prop D built out. These tall towers are the predominate address to housing and will sit on the northern part of the site.

![View of the Mission Project that depict the scale of the towers that were approved through Prop D](image)

*View of the Mission Project that depict the scale of the towers that were approved through Prop D (SWL 337 Design and development proposal Volume 1 Part 5)*

12 More on the tower structure’s can be found on the SWL 337 Design and Development Proposal Volume 1 Part 5.
Along with the issue of building heights are debates over public housing. As we have seen in this project, varying groups have different beliefs as to what they consider more crucial and the contradiction of use and exchange value plays out the most strongly in the area of housing. It is in the realm of housing that the conflicts between use and exchange value are most stark. To every human, the home inherently has use value because place is indispensable, all human activity needs to take place somewhere, but when property is put in the hands of those purely seeking exchange value (ie: realtors, landlords, lawyers etc), which appears in place as “rent,” the stakes change (Logan, 1946).

In the city, the goal is often two fold: create conditions that attract capital that allow the ability to charge high prices, while also creating conditions that make for a stable neighborhood that provide access to all residents. San Francisco is trying to achieve this delicate balance in the Mission Project. The development is set to produce 1,500 new residences with an originally proposed 33% public housing. However, this amount of public housing did not set well with some residents and city leaders because the development is on public land, where standards and access should be equal to residents. Fighting for use value, San Francisco supervisor Jane Kim pushed for more public housing, voicing she would not support the project under the teams original proposal and came up with her own plan that would limit building heights and increase affordable housing to 50% (Julia Wong, SFWeekly). In the end, the Giants came to a compromise with the city to make 40% of the housing affordable to protect the rest of their development. Though the team and city’s agreement about public housing was an unprecedented amount of affordable housing, the Giant’s motives still lay in exchange value and the city is still
prioritizing making decisions to satisfy the capital investors and support the growth machine.

The last distinct element that is being used for the promotion of this project is images of nature. For decades Mission Bay has been disconnected from the rest of the city, and humans have been estranged from nature. In its geographic location San Francisco is tied to the water, but people lacked access to it until about 20 years ago. Thus today, as the city looks to use the Mission Rock Project as a development to connect the city back to Mission Bay it is also using nature as one of the driving factors. There is a new longing from people to reconnect with the natural world in an urban setting. All over Mission Bay parks, extended walkways along the creek and green open space have been placed throughout the neighborhood, but the Giant are taking it even further by including three major new open spaces—Mission Rock Park (or the Great Lawn), Festival Park and Mission Rock Square all connected the a pedestrian only Las Ramblas in their billion dollar development (SWL 337 Design and Development proposal Volume 1 Part 6).

The Giants and the city both use images and access nature in their pursuit of exchange and use value. On the one had, for capital investors sponsoring this project nature is very advantageous because it increases exchange value. Not only do people want to be in close proximity to nature, so they are willing to pay more. The goal is also to host huge festivals and events on the vast open spaces like the Great Lawn which will produce huge amounts of revenue. On the other hand, the city is in favor of these public open spaces because it provides people access to places where they can relax and hang out, interact with others, build relationship and create community. By including a large amount of open spaces that are public and open to everyone it makes it seem like the city is prioritizing the
social need to connect with nature and other people, but in reality nature is just a cloak to hide the city’s own profit driven motives.

![Image of the Great Lawn, natural habitat, junior Giants field, and McCovey Cove Terraces. This is one of the three major open spaces that will be included in the project and one of the main images of nature used to promote the development](image)

The Mission Rock site is a pivotal location along the waterfront and the larger fabric of San Francisco. This project will not only have a significant impact on determining the future of Mission Bay, but will also have a substantial contribution on the waterfront as a whole by connecting the northern waterfront open space with the central waterfront of Mission Bay to Hunters Point in the south. With offices, retail, housing, open space and opportunity or entertainment and leisure, the Mission Rock Project seeks to be a space where there is something for everyone.

However, the team’s and city’s pursuit of exchange value in this project makes access to the space exclusive. In the pursuit of exchange, neighborhoods becomes organized as enterprises, and the neighborhoods become businesses. (Logan, 1946).
Through this section we learn the city’s motives for increased revenue in this project, reinforcing this idea of the city as a “growth machine.” The city becomes a servant to private capital investors and their preferences and neighborhood stability is sacrificed to economic growth goals. The motives of economic gain that get valued over the city’s civic obligations get rationalized with the justification that the increased capital that developments like the Mission Rock Project will bring will go back to the city for future projects. In other words, the city accepts with the Giant’s pursuit of exchange value instead of fighting for use value because they believe that the capital they will be gaining from this project will produce opportunities for the greater economic good in the future.

**The Golden State Warriors**

As a franchise, the Golden State Warriors have had a long history. They are one of the only three original charter members of the NBA still in existence. In their early playing days the Warriors were based in Philadelphia, but in 1962 the team relocated to the Bay Area. The Warriors have had less of an impact in the past on the city’s urban growth because the team only played a few years at San Francisco’s Cow Palace before moving to the Oakland Coliseum in 1971. They are now really about to change the urban landscape in a big way with their proposal to build the new Warriors arena in San Francisco’s Mission Bay (NBA.com). The team is growing, the organization changing and the Warriors are ready to build a new arena that is worthy of the 2015 NBA Champions, whom also set the record this past year with the best season in history 73-9. The Warriors haven’t played in San Francisco since 1971 and the people of the city and their new generation of fans are eager to get the highly successful team back.
Chase Arena aims to be a one of a kind event center that aims to be the best sports, entertainment and convention destination in the world. The new arena will not just be a multi use event space, but “a beacon of great art, culture, sports and entertainment for [the Bay Area], says Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase (Chasecenter.com). The project is expected to bring significant new property tax increments for the construction of public infrastructure, affordable housing, and millions of annual tax revenue for the city, but controversy sit at the center of development plans for this new arena (CAC Meeting Presentation). Mayor Ed Lee characterizes this as his “legacy project” and believes the event center will really round out Mission Bay as an incredible and diverse ecosystem that it is becoming, but others believe that it is going to be hugely detrimental to the UCSF hospital and disastrous for traffic.

View of the main plaza before entering Chase Center (Pfau Long Architecture, CAC Presentation)

This section untangles the complexities over the land in which the project will be built. Land generally, but particularly Block 29-31 where Chase Center is proposed to be built, comes with a set of interests already tied to it, creating controversy and tension between those connected with it, The Warriors and UCSF (Logan, 1946). Through my
analysis of the land, I reveal the motives and goals of the team and The Mission Bay Alliance, the organization opposing the arena. I address how the differing groups are fighting for their own ambitions and discuss the city’s prioritization of exchange value over use value in big developments like Chase Center.

**Chase Center**

*Tensions over land*

The Golden State Warrior began talk about building a new arena in 2012. The owners of the Warriors had been contemplating moving the team into a new privately financed sports and entertainment center from Oakland to San Francisco for some time and in 2014 warriors owners, Joe Lacob and Peter Guber finally announced plans to locate and build an arena at Piers 30-32 (Project Timeline, GSW Arena LLC).

What originally was going to be a $500 million 17,000 seat arena located on Pier 30-32 along the San Francisco waterfront (Figure 7) has now become a $1 billion 11-acre development in Mission Bay on Blocks 29-31. Chase Center will be the anchor to a small newly proposed district that will include restaurants, offices, public plazas and a waterfront park. This would be San Francisco’s first ever multi purpose arena and civic landmark for cultural, sports and entertainment activities.
The original proposed site, situated between the San Francisco Ferry Building and AT&T park, was heavily criticized by community residents and environmental activists. To community residents the neighborhood and its stability are really important. Not only does it represent the “home,” but they provide access to additional use values and resources. The addition of yet another arena in such close proximity to AT&T would hinder the neighborhood and make the area no longer “family friendly” as the South Beach- Rincon-Mission Bay Neighborhood Association stated in a Press Release sent to all major Bay Area newspapers. Neighborhood life is dependent on an area’s strategic utility to the growth machine apparatus (Logan, 1946) and growth in terms of another stadium would hurt the area. In addition, widespread environmental concerns including sea level rise, a defense often used for use value, created a lot of trouble for the team, so the Warriors abandoned that site and decided to build on a slice of private property located in Mission Bay (Cote, SFGate). They purchased a 11 acre plot owned by Salesforce.com in the rapidly developing Mission Bay Neighborhood to build their privately financed sports and entertainment center.

Placement, Patients and Purpose

There has been a lot of conflict over the land in which the arena will be built and tension only continues as planning moves forward on this Mission Bay event center. After more than 100 meetings to gather public input regarding the arena and addressing community concerns, the Warriors are moving full speed ahead with UCSF’s, California Life Science Association’s, the Mission Bay Citizen Advisory Committee’s, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure Commission (OCII), California Environmental
Quality Act (CEQA) and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors endorsement and approval of the project.

However, even though the team got a unanimous approval of the final environmental impact report by the board last December, much opposition remains because the arena is set to be built just one block away from the recently opened UCSF hospital. Many are concerned with the transportation and traffic implications the event center will cause on UCSF (Mission Bay Alliance Press Release). They believe the arena is essentially going to ruined decades of good work and planning in Mission Bay and negatively effect the hospital in a drastic way. (Singer, Mission Bay Alliance)

Leading the charge against the Warriors in the fight against the arena is the Mission Bay Alliance, a coalition of UCSF of stakeholders, donors, faculty, physicians, former board member and residents. They are alarmed by the impacts that the proposed arena will have on the hospital and neighboring communities. Their goals are to require the city to comply with state and local laws in order to protect the future of the vibrant community and medical campus at Mission Bay from the significant environmental impacts of the proposed arena (Petition, 1). As the Alliance would put it they are “protecting our healthcare [and] preserving our waterfront.” The Alliance has put together a strong legal team and filed an official petition for writ of mandate. They have filed a number of lawsuits to block the arena from further progress. One charges the UCSF chancellor Sam Hawgood with overstepping his authority by signing the memorandum in support of the project in exchange for a transportation improvement pledge (King, SFGate). Transportation is the biggest concern, because of the actual landscape of Mission Bay. There are only three access points and the area is not served by public transit well, so with the arena, traffic
congestion would only increase. The traffic would block access to lifesaving medial services, create a parking nightmare and saturate limited and insufficient area transit options.

To address some of these concerns, Hawgood agreed to support the project in exchange for a $10 million Mission Bay Transportation improvement fund that would go toward controlling the flow of traffic in the neighborhood, deployment of traffic control officers along traffic lanes that would be dedicated to UCSF hospital vehicles and improving public transportation (MBCAC Presentation). (Figure 7) All funds for this would come from new revenue from the project. Negotiations for this agreement between the Warriors, UCSF and the city took months. However, the Mission Bay Alliance was still very dissatisfied with this agreement, which they argue accomplishes nothing, but create permanent gridlock. (Mission Bay Alliance)

UCSF was the spark that started all the development in the Mission Bay area, however as the area continues to grow and rich entrepreneurs and a sports teams pursue exchange value, the university and its use values get pushed aside. Even though it was the relationship between the university and the city that stimulated growth for this desolate area in the first place, UCSF is losing their claims to the land. This shift does not sit well with the University because the arena physically blocks the university’s plan for continued growth and jeopardizes the success of current healthcare and biomedical research at Mission Bay. The once valued UCSF and its development now sits on the back burner, while the city now prioritizes the exchange value of a billion dollar sports arena development. The “urban growth machine” merely uses people, university’s and sports
teams to help San Francisco political leaders to constantly move themselves in what they think to be the right direction, which is always shifting.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

While the future of these project remains unclear and debates over land use, transportation and open space continue one thing we do know is these projects of are built on multiple conflicts. The city reinforces its character as a “growth machine” and uses elements of use value to cover their actual pursuit of exchange value. They rationalize the building of sports stadiums and creating more opportunity for leisure instead of building public parks or more affordable housing. They argue that these billion dollar developments will bring millions of annual tax revenue for the city, new jobs, significant new property tax for the construction of public infrastructure and future affordable housing. These developments will “grow” the city because there are currently no neighborhoods in San Francisco that have the level of public housing that the Mission Rock Project possess and San Francisco is the only city of the 25 most populous cities in the US that does not have an indoor arena of 12,000 seats or more, but this type of growth that is portrayed as being beneficial for everyone gets unevenly distributed and proves to not advantageous for everyone.

Overall Thesis Conclusion

San Francisco is a city that has built itself through capitalizing on its physical location along the waterfront, utilizing psychological ties to sports and prioritizing economic growth by whatever means necessary. In Chapter 1, we saw the waterfront rise through trade movement, fall with inadequate infrastructure and revive with revitalization of Port lands.
Transformations of the waterfront began in the 1990s, shifting from a place of economy through shipping to recreation and as people started to reconnect with the water sports teams desired to be a part of it all as well. In Chapter 2, we see AT&T get built, become an iconic part of the waterfront and then spark the Port to invest and partner which other organizations for further developments along the waterfront. Sports have always played a big role in shaping San Francisco’s city landscape, and today the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center, two sports sponsored development projects are at the center of controversy in San Francisco’s urban future. They have framed to be projects that will benefit everyone and promote good for the whole city, but in reality they symbolize the disproportionate power of sports in the city, battles over policy, contradictions of use and exchange value and market led transformations of the land.

This paper began with quotes from the top executives of the companies sponsoring the Mission Rock Project and Chase Center. As both teams fight to get their projects to break ground, both developments have been met with obstacles and conflict. Sports and stadium building with the use of public subsidies have always been controversial. The intersection of sports and city politics is clear in the desire of the city and sports teams to have both use and exchange value within their billion dollar developments. City officials, financial elites and franchise owners dominate the decisions made surrounding development and they are also the entities that sustain the “growth machine” known as the city and the places we call home.

Locality becomes bound to power and politics, but as a place becomes a product of social action and defined by social relationships about who has rights to the city and to change and shape its future (Harvey). After reading past literature on the role of sports and
city building while using the framework of the urban growth machine to analyze the billion dollar projects sponsored by the Giants and Warriors, I showed that that sports and the city use each other to further their own motives. Patterns seem to never die and stadiums continue to be the anchor to “authentic and viable urban neighborhoods” that city’s are trying to build.

While economic growth is always on the minds of cities and teams and is the measure that people use to define success, projects like the Mission Rock initiative and Chase Center will not always promote the public good that they intend to bring along with the capital increase they seek. Projects like these are where the basic contradictions between the two kinds of interests between use and exchange value in the commodification of place are most acute (Logan, 1946). In thinking and planning for the future of our cities, I believe that in Harvey’s formulation that the “right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after out hearts desires” (Harvey, 939).

The organization of our neighborhoods are crucial to creating our communities and we as people who make up the community have a right to make the city different and remake it in an image that we desire. Cities aren’t built and don’t survive on the power and desire sports teams and rich entrepreneurs. Cities are collectively and individually made through our experiences, social relationships, political engagement and economic values. Thus, we must assert our voice, judge the value of projects like these and make choices that create real community ourselves. The city will always seek growth, but growth does not have look like more sports stadiums and million dollar high-rise offices. We can and should
reimagine what growth really looks like to build better lives and a better city that will provide equal advantage and opportunity.
Figure 6: Mission Bay Neighborhood zoned block by block. (Mission Bay Development Group)
Figure 6.1: Ads used to promote Yes on Prop D paid for by San Franciscans for affordable housing, Jobs & parks, Yes on Prop D, a coalition of the San Francisco Giants and Mission Bay residents. Sponsored and major funding by the San Francisco Giants (MLB).

Figure 7: Image of the Warriors Arena on the original proposed site of Pier 30-32 (SFGate)
Figure 8:
Transportation improvement plans, one of the many plans they have come up. Others include local/hospital access plans, additional parking and pre-event routes. (Office of Economic and Workforce Development)
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Images:


The Ferry Building, the focal point of the whole waterfront, is a 660 foot two storey building with repeating interior arches, overhead skylights and a 245 foot ball clock tower. Formerly a bustling ferry terminal, over 50,000 residents, travelers and commuters used to make their way through the building each day. But, in the late 1950s, the building saw change when ferry use drastically decreased due to the Bay Bridge that connected the East Bay to San Francisco. Much of the building was then converted into offices creating unsettled mixed use of waterfront space. This was the beginnings of how waterfront land use would change to be mixed, but then in 2003 we see even more change with a complete renovation of the building which changed the whole dynamic of the waterfront. The center piece of the embarcadero, the renovation brought new life, new business and new activity to the waterfront. What started out as a long wooden shed with a central tower and a long arcade across the front in the late 1800s is now the city’s celebrated, revitalized central marketplace. This public-private collaboration is the shining example of a successful mixed use property along the waterfront with a world class food market place on the ground level and quality view office spaces on the upper levels all under the same roof. The successful rehabilitation of the Ferry Building that incorporates commerce with shops, restaurants, weekly farmers market, a small historic gallery that features images and objects from the buildings history, a ferry terminal, and public uses, brought people and the city backs to its roots as a port. The city’s whole goal was to create public access, entertainment, more open space and expand maritime activity all while serving the needs of society which was exactly what the renovation of the ferry building did and thus a chain of redevelopments all along the waterfront followed,