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Commercial real estate

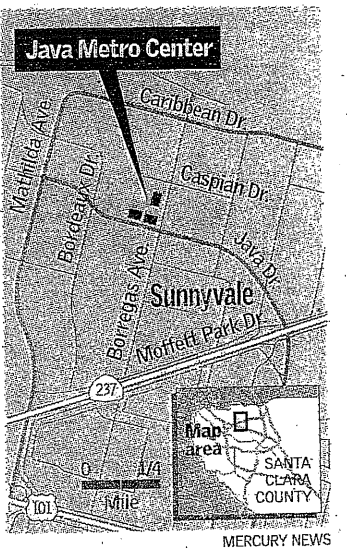
Moffett Park looks to greener future

DEVELOPERS CAN INCREASE DENSITY BY FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENTAL RULES

By Katherine Conrad
Mercury News

The days of one-story concrete tilt-ups are numbered, especially in Sunnyvale, where the aging denizens of development are being torn down to make way for prime commercial real estate.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in the city's 1,100-acre Moffett Park, home to Yahoo, Ariba and Juniper Networks. The park has lured developers not just for its location — north of Highway 237 and U.S. 101 — but also for the chance to construct taller structures if they agree to build green.



MERCURY NEWS

That means construction must follow environmentally friendly guidelines established by the U.S. Green Building Council for energy efficiency, reduced water usage and sustainable building materials. Developers who agree to follow the guidelines can automatically build up to 20 percent more on a site without obtaining a special planning permit.

Not only does that mean demolishing dozens of low-slung structures of yesteryear that barely covered a third of a site, but it raises today's high densities even higher. For example, the developer who agrees to go green can build a 70,000-square-foot building on a 100,000-square-foot lot. Before, the floor-to-area ratio was restricted to a 50,000-square-foot structure.

If Sunnyvale was looking to entice developers to build green, the city — currently in the middle of a construction boom — couldn't have dangled a tastier carrot.

Builders who develop mid-

See **MOFFETT**, *Page 4C*

MOFFETT | Green guidelines provide incentives

Continued from Page 1C

rise campuses are heading there, bypassing neighboring San Jose and Santa Clara, which are months away from adopting similar programs.

Last year, developer Jay Paul Company selected Sunnyvale to build its "green" 1.8-million-square-foot Moffett Towers, the valley's first speculative office development since the tech wreck. Now, ExTerra Realty Partners of Pleasanton is planning to construct an environmentally friendly 390,000-square-foot campus, called Java Metro Center, also in Moffett Park.

Razing the original Lockheed Martin three-building campus built by SCM Properties of Menlo Park in the early 1980s (it later became the headquarters for SanDisk) just started. Eventually, the campus will feature three 4- and 5-story Class-A office structures.

Mike Parker, a principal with ExTerra, said he liked the site's location across the street from a light rail station. But the density bonus to go green was very appealing.

"The ability to capture the additional density piqued our interest," he said.

Parker, who became certified in LEED construction principles three years ago, said he plans to try to achieve a silver level of LEED certification on the project, which is higher than the standard certification required by the city.

"Going green is the wave of the future," he said. "If you're not in step, you will be passed by."

Steve Pace, a principal broker with CPS/CORFAC International of Santa Clara, said the as-yet-unbuilt development has attracted interest from companies needing premium office space. He thinks the green element will give Java Metro Center an edge over similar buildings.

"Companies are more and more cognizant of the environment and the green status and what it means," he said. "They will want to bolster their standings."

Trudi Ryan, Sunnyvale's planning officer, said the city jumped on the green construction bandwagon back in 2000, when it began to consider how to shape Moffett Park. Ryan said city officials happened to attend conferences where the environmentally friendly building standards were discussed, and they decided to incorporate them into the Moffett Park Specific Plan adopted in 2004.

Given the park's ultimate build-out size of 24.3 million square feet of development, the green guidelines pack a wallop.

Before it became Moffett Park, the area was filled with one- and two-story research-and-development structures

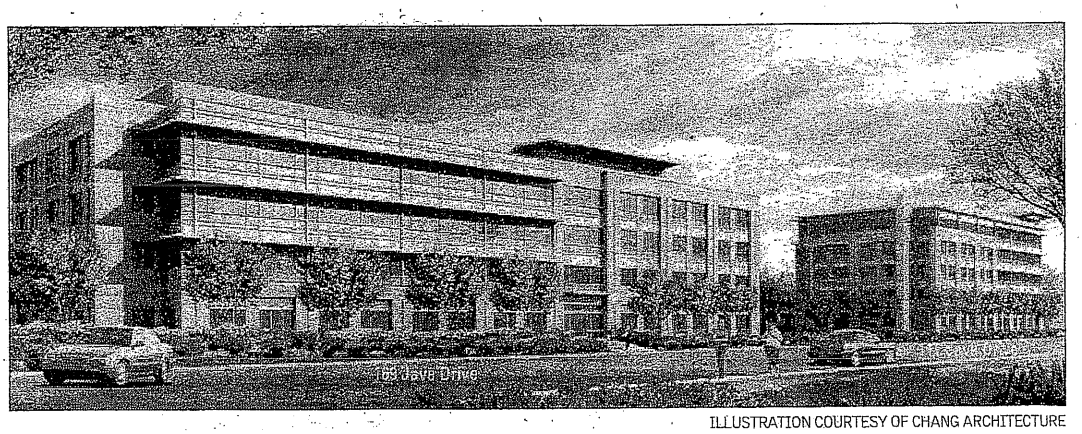


ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF CHANG ARCHITECTURE

ExTerra Realty Partners will build a green campus, the Java Metro Center, in Moffett Park.

left over from the days when the region was a bastion of the defense industry. After defense companies left, city officials knew buildings would need to be taller not only to accommodate steeper prices for land, but also the needs of today's information — not manufacturing-based — technology companies.

Another Moffett Park project going green is the Network Appliance campus, Ryan said. The company began work on its 1.4 million-square-foot campus, of five office buildings and three parking structures, several years ago.

Developer California Bavarian, based in Palo Alto, is building two Class-A office structures on speculation, for a total of 118,000 square feet on Bordeaux Drive. They will be built using green guidelines.

"We are going over and above the LEED qualifications because it's the right thing to do," said Mark Mordell, company president.

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