Looking Forward, Looking Back

Bay Area's cities chase redevelopment opportunities

- Oakland waterfront will soon have a developer
- Without Pier 70 in San Francisco
- San Jose hopes its airport remake will fly

Handsomely Rewarded
Needy landlords offer pricey perks to commercial brokers

Project FROG
Architect uses design to give education the jump

Mills Act
Grinding through historic preservation in San Francisco

Final Offer | Diane Filippi
SPUR’s fresh new digs
Mission Statement
The Registry is a real estate journal that aspires to fulfill the need of Bay Area professionals for accurate, unbiased and timely news, analysis and information.

Publisher
Vladimir Bosanac
vb@theregistrysf.com

President
Heather Bosanac
heather@theregistrysf.com
415.290.6982

Editor-in-Chief
Sharon Simonson
ssimonson@theregistrysf.com
408.334.2512

Creative Director
Karyn Charm

Photographers
Jason Steinberg, Chad Ziemendorf

Writers
Alfred J. Bru, Heather Fox, Crawford Frazer, Jessica Saunders, Sharon Simonson, Irwin Speizer, Aimee Lewis Strain, Sasha Vasilyuk

Contributors
Rob La Eace, Jill Pilaroscia, Scott D. Rogers, Tay C. Via

Advertising
415.738.6434
heather@theregistrysf.com

Printer
Bay Area Graphics
www.bayareographics.com

News
news@theregistrysf.com

Feedback
letters@theregistrysf.com

Subscriptions
subscriptions@theregistrysf.com

Ethics Policy
The Registry embraces a strict ethics policy for its staff and contributing writers, including columnists and freelance reporters. No person employed by or affiliated with The Registry has accepted or will accept any compensation, monetary or otherwise, in exchange for editorial content. All information that appears in the magazine is selected solely for its informational value to readers.

Contributors

Rob La Eace
The Market About... Nothing! pg. 28

Responding to emergencies as a firefighter in a variety of uncertain situations and diverse neighborhoods taught Rob La Eace a lot about how people should be treated, not only during a crisis, but also in everyday problems. Today, these same skills are an asset to those who work with this San Francisco native in his career as a broker associate with McGuire Real Estate. The tools he puts to work as a firefighter are what makes the difference to the clients Rob works with as an agent. While it may help that Rob is the type of guy with a warm smile and a friendly attitude, his professionalism, organization and drive to succeed are what make him stand out in his career. Working in his fifth year in the industry, Rob is in touch with his clients’ needs and with the city—putting a local’s perspective to work.

Jill Pilaroscia
Colorful Character, pg. 26

Jill Pilaroscia has been an international color consultant since 1984. She earned her bachelor of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute and is an accredited member of the International Association of Color Consultants. She has been a consultant for multiple high-profile projects across the Bay Area including China Basin biotech offices in Mission Bay for McCarthy Cook & Co. and RREEF Alternative Investments; Marin Commons, a San Rafael office campus owned by the Hines company, a developer and property manager; Aventino Apartments in Los Gatos for The Sobrato Organization, a South Bay office and apartment owner; and Emeryville’s Bay Street townhomes for Regis Homes of Northern California. Her firm recorded sales of $650,000 last year and has four employees.

Scott D. Rogers
Smoking Gun, pg. 25

Scott D. Rogers is a senior partner in the Real Estate, Development, Land Use and Finance Group of Holme Roberts & Owen LLP. His practice focuses on representing institutional and private real estate investors in all aspects of real estate equity and finance transactions. He obtained his bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of California, Irvine, and his law degree and master’s of business administration from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is chair of the Executive Committee of the Real Property Section of the State Bar of California.

Tay C. Via
Carbon Caps Land, pg. 20

Tay C. Via is a partner with San Francisco law firm Coblenz, Patch, Duffy & Bass LLP. She specializes in land use and development, with particular emphasis on large public/private projects, including the San Francisco Giants’ ballpark, the 303-acre Mission Bay development, Westfield San Francisco Centre and the Academy of Sciences’ internationally renowned new LEED platinum museum. Via chairs her firm’s Renewable Energy and Climate Change practice and also serves as co-chair of the SB 375 Task Force for the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR). She is listed in BestLawyers in America for her expertise in land use and zoning.

CORRECTION
In the April issue that listed the IIDA-NC Honor Awards winners, in the Work Big Notable category we referred to one of the design team members as Lucas Brown. His name should have read Lucas Martin.
SHrinkring cash flows and scarce tenants have commercial property owners looking for ways to inexpensively reposition their holdings to improve competitiveness in a tough market. Some are finding that the right new color scheme can make that big difference affordable.

As a color consultant based in San Francisco, I’ve been fielding a number of calls recently from Bay Area owners of apartment buildings, smaller suburban office buildings and even large institutional owners wanting to make an impact at low cost.

Our clients tell us that adding the right colors can improve financial performance with a relatively minimal investment, an outcome widely welcomed in today’s economy.

A year and a half ago, Woodmont Cos. of Belmont successfully integrated color changes on a 94-unit apartment property in Corte Madera. Its main goal was to help improve rents, and this mission has been accomplished.

“We find that color offers the single most dramatic impact for the least cost,” says Greg Galli of Woodmont. “Along with renovations, we have been able to achieve 15 percent higher rents.”

Some of the questions with which I start may not be obvious. I try to find out what are the demographics of the group that they are trying to attract; where the property is located, in foggy San Francisco or sunny downtown Sunnyvale; what the existing landscaping looks like. In the end, it’s all about distinguishing clients’ properties from those of their competitors, enhancing people’s experience of the environment and getting warm bodies in the door.

For residential rental properties, routine maintenance can afford an excellent opportunity to upgrade color schemes. With existing construction, choosing the right colors means considering the color of such elements as roofs, railings, window milliions and frames, as well as site topography and landscaping.

Most apartments are constructed with aluminum windows whose proportions make them look underscaled on the elevations. Trimming windows in a contrasting hue adds heft. Undersides of eaves, decks and ceilings at entryways can be used to brighten and augment surface texture. Differentiation of unit entry doors creates individuality. A conscious decision to either contrast or blend the buildings with the surrounding landscape can result in a palette that feels validated by its site.

For a more affluent demographic, the color scheme can be ambitious. The Sobrato Organization, based in Cupertino, was looking for solutions for its Willow Lake apartment community in San Jose, a set of one-, two- and three-bedroom townhomes built in 1990. All building roofs needed replacement, and the owners initially planned to engage in architectural renovation, as well. Given the current economy, they decided to stick with repairs and to upgrade the paint with a new color scheme.

The approach involved three or four different color palettes for the 508-unit complex, each consisting of four to five colors, to create sufficient diversity to appeal to Silicon Valley’s high-income renters, to compete with several newly upgraded adjacent properties and to deal with the range of conditions of the balconies, stairs and decks.

On the other side of the bay a development of 27 new homes called Peridot at Niles in Fremont was getting completed in 2008. The owner, Regis Homes of Northern California, wanted to make them stand out before they went on the market. The high-end homes, offering five floor plans up to 2,700 square feet, had been designed in three different styles, Spanish, Craftsman and Queen Anne. Eleven different palettes were carefully arranged on the site for optimal visual variety and to enhance the experience.

**Top to bottom:**
- Middle income rental properties can improve occupancy with dynamic color palettes.
- Higher end rentals are colored with several distinct color palettes. The owners are willing to manage the palettes as they distinguish their properties.
- Higher end for-sale properties use multiple palettes to lend a sense of individuality to the homes.
- Office complexes in suburban locations can successfully reposition themselves with minor architectural improvements and significant changes in color.
of the buyer particularly during the crucial first 30 seconds it is viewed.

Color can also help reposition suburban office buildings by giving them a distinctive look that contrasts with often drab surroundings. Last year, San Francisco-based Union Property Capital purchased a vacant three-story office building in downtown Walnut Creek and started renovating it as a medical office building. Although the building occupies a major intersection, its original colors—bronze-tinted windows, dark-bronze mullions, tan stucco and red/brown face brick cladding—did not stand out in a downtown where shades of brown predominate. Its monolithic presence did nothing to engage the community and welcome visitors.

After a detailed site survey looking for architectural opportunities to add colors, score lines were identified that could be used as color transition points. Working with the existing brick cladding limits, Union Property Capital wanted to communicate that this is a professional, upgraded medical office building. Wanting to keep the costs contained, they started with minimal intervention, doing detailed placement of two or three colors on stucco. The more aggressive alternate, painting the brick face cladding, is also in the wings, allowing for a wider range of colors and more dramatically altering the way the building sits on its site.

In an era of statewide budget crunches, public institutions are also looking for the cost-conscious solutions that color can provide. The University of California, San Francisco, recently initiated a project to upgrade eight miles of corridors in a complex of several buildings at its Parnassus Heights Campus in San Francisco. Visitors have always struggled to find their way in this setting because the structures are linked to each other in an ad hoc manner. Initial plans for architectural renovations have been tabled in favor of paint and repair work, which does not require lengthy government approval processes and is more economical. The new color scheme will give each building its own color. Corridors will have one wall painted in that color, with the opposite wall painted white to relieve monotony and help people orient themselves. Elevator lobbies will have colors tying into their building’s palette.

It seems to me that color is not a luxury but a necessity in a tough real estate market. It’s the one part of first impressions that you can change easily and inexpensively. And as we all know, there’s no second chance to make the first impression.

Jill Pilaroscia can be reached at 415.292.6376 or info@colourstudio.com.

In the end, it’s all about distinguishing clients’ properties from those of their competitors, enhancing people’s experience of the environment and getting warm bodies in the door.