

Celebrating a Decade at Mission Bay



The Vision

In the late 1990s, at the tail end of the Dot-Com boom, San Francisco faced a dilemma and an opportunity. The city was still in the rush of the young, tech culture, in which startup companies made millions overnight, but that didn't look sustainable. Meanwhile, UCSF, the city's health sciences university that spun out Genentech, Chiron and many of the first biotechs, was bursting at the seams and considering leaving town to find space. That departure would mean the loss of the city's second-largest employer; a world leader in health research, education and patient care; and its biotech icon.

Just south of the San Francisco Bay Bridge, within city limits, lay 303 acres of abandoned rail yards, a relic of the city's heyday in the gold rush and shipping business. What better place to create a new economic zone, a new center in which the city could parlay its maverick history into a future of innovation?

The Players

In San Francisco's City Hall sat Willie J. Brown, Jr., a mayor renowned for his ability as a dealmaker, with a drive to rebuild San Francisco's leadership in biotech. Nelson Rising, who had taken the helm in 1994 of the section's landowner, Catellus Development Corp., was transforming a railroad land company into a diversified development company.

At UCSF, Chancellor Joseph Martin and Nobel laureate J. Michael Bishop were leading the effort to find space. Then came the Bay Area Life Sciences Alliance (BALSA), led by Cliff Graves, former UCSF professor William Rutter and GAP Chief Executive Don Fisher, who were determined to keep UCSF in the city. BALSA brought them to the table and together, they mapped out a deal in which Catellus and the city would donate 43 acres to UCSF, to build the hub for a new economic zone. In 1999, they broke ground on the Mission Bay campus.

Decade of Innovation

Since UCSF opened the doors of its first building 10 years ago, Mission Bay has developed into an ecosystem of bioscience, with the new UCSF research campus as its hub. During that time, the university's total research enterprise has grown to nearly \$1.065 billion, while UCSF has risen to No. 2 nationwide in National Institutes of Health funding, making it the largest public recipient of U.S. funding in the health sciences.

UCSF's research strengths in cancer, cardiovascular disease and neuroscience have attracted the spokes of that hub: industry, with nine companies, including Bayer and Pfizer, within a block of the campus; venture capital, with 10 firms across the street; five life sciences incubators; and 50 startup companies. Those startups have gone on to raise \$230 million in follow-on funding and now employ 300 people, while San Francisco's total life sciences companies have grown from one in 2003, to 108 now. Another 75 new entrepreneurs have soft-launched companies in the past year and are on their way to joining the community.

Just as Silicon Valley – with its entrepreneurs, venture community and proximity to Stanford and UC Berkeley – became the symbol of leading-edge technology worldwide, Mission Bay is becoming the model of life science innovation, focused on turning the most advanced science into public benefit. Two years from now, that commitment will launch anew, with the opening of three UCSF specialty hospitals across the street. This new UCSF Medical Center will tie together research and care, to complete the spectrum of bench-to-bedside innovation.