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Candlestick Park will go out with a wrecking ball, not a bang

By Matier & Ross Updated 7:30 am, Friday, January 16, 2015



IMAGE 1 OF 61
Randy Brant (left), executive vice president of Macerich, speaks alongside Mayor Ed Lee and Kofi Bonner, president of Lennar's San Francisco division, during a news conference in the Candlestick Park parking lot on Nov. 17.

Phil Matier: Housing, Shopping Area Planned For Candlestick Park Site **SF Bay Area**
CBS San Francisco

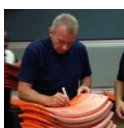


Plans for a pyrotechnic implosion of Candlestick Park have fizzled in favor of the wrecking ball — with health fears and political pressure playing a big part in the decision.

The 54-year-old stadium is being demolished to make way for a shopping center, hotel and housing complex. But an attention-grabbing plan to implode the Stick next month ran into stiff opposition from **Golden Gate University's** Environmental Law and Justice Clinic and the **Bayview Hill Neighborhood Association** over fears about noise and the spread of toxic dust.

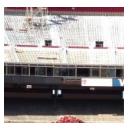
Rather than go to the mat, **Kofi Bonner**, president of the **San Francisco division** of Lennar Corp. — the developer that controls the site — said it would be “in the best interests” of the project and the city to get moving using more conventional methods.

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Just this week, the **San Francisco Department of Building Inspection** issued a permit to Lennar to use “high-reach excavators” to tear down the stadium in sections. .

The demolition is expected to begin before the end of January and take about two months — compared with the 20 seconds or so it would have taken to implode it.

The **Planning Commission** signed off on the implosion plan back in September, but it still required a permit from Building Inspection.

Law Professor **Helen Kang**, director of Golden Gate's Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, said there has been only one health study done on implosions — a 2005 report out of Canada — but that it found the potential effects were so great that the researchers recommended “banning implosions altogether in urban settings.”

Kang and neighbors have warned that silica, or concrete dust, can raise rates of asthma, heart disease and cancer.

“In an area that has so many problems such as Bayview-Hunters Point, this implosion is a crazy idea,” Kang told us.

Lennar originally concluded that imploding the old concrete-and-steel stadium — while more expensive than conventional methods because of insurance and the like — would be the fastest way to clear the property. It would also mean far fewer trips — and less pollution — for trucks hauling debris from the site.

The company had even been “musing” over the possibility of turning the implosion into a Super Bowl pyrotechnic extravaganza that would have been broadcast live across the country during halftime. Not only would it have been good theater, but it would have ensured Lennar met its own deadline to clear the property by March.

Bonner said such plans were always contingent on persuading neighbors to go along. But that wasn't happening — in fact, opposition was growing louder, with the [San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council](#) coming out against it Thursday.

Lennar saw which way the notorious Candlestick winds were blowing and opted to defuse what was fast becoming a politically charged situation — in a year when one of its favorite local politicians, Mayor [Ed Lee](#), is up for re-election.

“We have sought and received input from the community and our partner, the city,” Bonner said in a statement, and as a result, “Lennar intends to withdraw its request to implode the stadium.”

San Francisco Chronicle columnists [Phillip Matier](#) and [Andrew Ross](#) appear Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays. Matier can be seen on the KPIX TV morning and evening news. He can also be heard on KCBS radio Monday through Friday at 7:50 a.m. and 5:50 p.m. Got a tip? Call (415) 777-8815, or e-mail matierandross@sfchronicle.com. Twitter: [@matierandross](#)

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