

San Francisco Examiner



Worldwide design hunt is on

Panel of experts to select winning architects from list of international competitors

By: Bonnie Eslinger

October 28, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO - A team of experts has been chosen to judge an international competition to find the best design and architectural team for The City's new Transbay Terminal project, which will include a tower that is anticipated to become San Francisco's tallest building.

The seven-member jury is composed of experts in their fields — ranging from urban design to transportation and land use.

The Transbay Terminal project will be designed to bring together regional bus lines and a Caltrain connection together within a new transit center at First and Mission streets. Transit advocates also hope to eventually bring the state's first high-speed rail line to the modernized public transportation hub.

The new terminal would be built within a new transit-centered neighborhood that would include stores, restaurants and office space, as well as 2,400 new homes, more than one-third of which will be affordable, according to Transbay project officials. The project would also include a 1,000-foot high-rise that would include a hotel, as well as residential and commercial units.

Scheduled to begin in 2008 and end by 2014, this phase of the development is estimated to cost nearly \$1 billion, funding that has already been secured through local, state and federal sources, according to project spokesman Adam Alberti.

Next week, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, the regional agency overseeing the project, will open the competition with a request for qualifications from developers interested in vying for the chance to design what Transbay officials are calling "the Grand Central Station of the West." A contract would be awarded to the winning developer by October 2007, according to the project's timeline.

Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic Robert Campbell, one of the chosen jurists, spoke at an authority board meeting Friday and said he was honored to be working on a project that "creates a civic landmark, that will identify the next area of growth in the South of Market."

Authority board member Michael Cohen, who also works for The City as director of base use and development, said at the meeting that after years of working on the Transbay Terminal plan, he's looking forward to seeing the competition results.

"It's beginning to feel more tangible for those of us who have been waiting for a long time," Cohen said.

The authority board also voted to approve the creation of a Citizens Advisory Board to help oversee the progress of the Transbay Terminal project.

A second phase of the project, slated to begin in 2012 and end by 2018, would create an underground extension that would bring the Caltrain line from its station at Fourth and King streets to the Transbay Terminal. The total cost for both projects is estimated at \$3.4 billion, of which \$1.5 billion is still without committed funding.

Transbay officials are not worried, Alberti said.

"All projects of this size and scope have funding challenges," he said. "We've delivered a great deal of the funding because it's a high priority of the region. For every step you take, a few more doors will open up, because you've shown the progress and the ability to deliver each portion of the project."