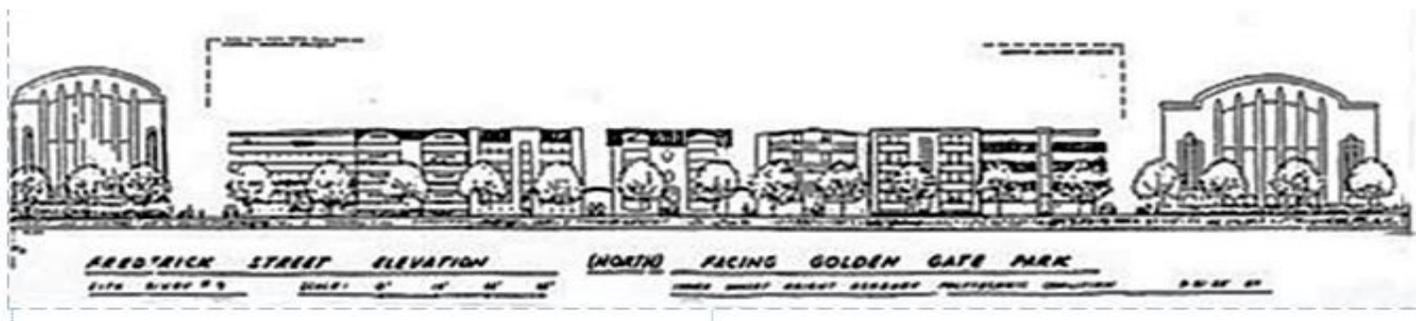


SHARING A COMMUNITY:

The Story of the Development of The Housing at Polytechnic High School

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FEBRUARY 1989



The 114 housing units at the site of the old Polytechnic High School on Frederick Street was the product of nearly a decade of community advocacy, involving the volunteer efforts of literally hundreds of residents of the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset neighborhoods. It is a story that needs to be understood, not only because it is a model of what dedicated neighborhood action can achieve, but also because it is a story of neighbors joining together not to simply protect what they have, as is all too often the case in San Francisco, but of neighbors joining together to share what they have with others—neighbors, in short, building a community.

The ten year struggle to develop the site for community use eventually involved one city wide voter referendum, four votes of the Board of Supervisors, four votes of the Board of Unified School District, three law suits, two hearings before the San Francisco Planning Commission, and two hearings before the Board of Permit Appeals. From start to finish the development involved coordinating the efforts of the Department of City Planning, The Recreation and Park Department, the City Bureaus of Building Inspection and Real Estate, the City Architect, the City Attorney, the staff of the SFUSD, the Mayor's Office of Housing, two Mayor's administrations (Mayor Feinstein and Mayor Agnos), two pro-bono private architectural firms (the San Francisco Foundation for Architectural Heritage and Pflueger Architects), the Lawyers Committee for Urban Affairs, eight neighborhood based non-profit affordable housing development corporations and technical assistance providers of the Council of Community Housing Orginizations, ten neighborhood organizations from the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset neighborhoods, and scores of neighborhood volunteers—architects, designers, recreational specialists, landscape architects, child care providers and advocates, artists, theatrical producers, merchants, business people, and residents.

No governmental agency, no private developer, could afford to lavish the time, study, care and concern on this project that was required to see it through its twisting and frustrating path. Only neighborhood residents, committed to building and sharing their community by volunteering their time and engery could have seen this development to its completion.

THE SITE

One of the reasons the development took so long and followed such a twisted path was that it was a publicly owned site that by 1977 no longer served the purpose for which it was originally acquired. No local public agency had any ideas about the future of the site, either. Only the community really wanted the place.

A second reason was the size of Poly. Spread over 3.2 acres was a complex of five buildings. Dominating the site was the 70 foot high Main Academic Building along Frederick Street of some 133,000 square feet (s/f), which included a 1,200 seat auditorium and scores of classrooms. Along Carl Street was the 43,000 s/f Shops Building. On either side of the Main Academic Building were two gyms. The West (Boys) gym contained some 25,000 s/f of space and the East (Girls) gym about 15,000 s/f. Along side the Shops Building on Carl Street were six "temporary" class rooms of wood frame construction. The entire site was built on the side of a slope, with the Carl Street side being some 50 feet higher than the Frederick Street side.

One other aspect of the site proved to be crucial. It was unclear just which "branch" of local government actually "owned" the site. While Poly was a functioning high school there as no question that the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) "owned" it. But once it was declared "surplus" by the SFUSD, the City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) could claim "ownership". Originally, the "school district" was once a department of the CCSF. It wasn't until sometime later that the SFUSD was formed as a separate legal entity. In early 1911 when Poly was built the "school district" was a city department and Poly was paid for with city funds. Title was transferred to the SFUSD when it was formed, but some city officials claimed that the land was still owned by the CCSF, not the SFUSD and should school use cease on the site its title would revert to the CCSF.

For over sixty years Polytechnic High School educated young San Franciscans from the central part of our City. By the mid 1970's the facility was in a sorry state. Moreover, a then recently effective state law required that all schools meet a minimum level of seismic safety, something the un-reinforced brick and masonry Poly could not do without a major expenditure of school district funds. In the end, the SFUSD decided to build a new high school (McAteer) and formally declare Poly "surplus" and close it.

Neighborhood opposition to the closing of Poly was intense. Many of the residents wanted a high school in their neighborhood for their children. Other residents were concerned that by declaring Poly surplus, the real intention of the SFUSD was to sell the land, which totaled 3.2 acres, to a private developer or the University of California/San Francisco Medical Center for its use, both of which were unacceptable to these neighborhood organizations.

ROUND ONE: THE LEASE OF POLY FOR A COMMUNITY CENTER, 1977-1978

Poly was one of some 40 pieces of school property the SFUSD felt it no longer needed in 1977. In order to advise the School Board on what should be done with these sites, many of which were located in areas of the City which could command a very high market price if sold to developers, the Board appointed an Advisory Committee on Surplus School Sites. Testimony was solicited from the public by the Advisory Committee and a report to the Board was made.

Neighborhood and community groups in both the Haight-Ashbury and the Inner-Sunset, who had organized “the Poly Coalition” aimed at developing a community center on the site, gave testimony to the Advisory Committee on Poly. The thrust of the testimony was that the entire facility should be leased to a community controlled non-profit corporation for the development of a multi-purpose community center serving the needs of the neighborhoods.

The Advisory Committee agreed and in its report recommended that Poly be leased for the development of a community center. The Board of Education agreed with the Committee and passed a resolution calling for Poly to be leased for a community center in December, 1977. By allowing a lease for the site the thorny question of who “owned” Poly was avoided. The City Attorney had ruled that if the SFUSD “leased” a site claimed by the CCSF, the lease proceeds could go to the school district. However, if the site was sold, then the CCSF would get the proceeds. This opinion, a few years later, proved very important in the community effort to control what was developed at Poly.

The Poly Coalition, working with the Haight-Ashbury Community Development Corporation, set out to organize a program and a budget for the community center in order to enter into a lease agreement with the SFUSD for Poly. After a series of meetings in the neighborhood in September and October of 1977, a program was devised to locate the Haight-Ashbury Co-operative Nursery School, the Haight-Ashbury Senior Service Program, a new Head Start pre-school program and the UCSF Langley Porter Institute high school program in part of the school site and plan for the other community uses to be added after these four “core” programs located in the school. These four service providers along with the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council, the Haight-Ashbury CDC and the Inner-Sunset Action Committee formally incorporated a non-profit corporation called the “Haight-Ashbury Sunset Community Center, Inc.” (HASCC).

With the assistance of the San Francisco Lawyers Committee for Urban Affairs, a multi-year lease for the entire site was negotiated for the HASCC. While these complex negotiations were underway, the HASCC set about planning the alterations needed for the four programs and raising funds for the center. Using volunteer community architects, plans were devised and some \$300,000 was raised to locate the four programs at Poly. Finally, in the summer of 1978 the lease was signed and approved by the School Board.

However, the passage of Proposition 13 in November of 1978 threw the SFUSD into a funding crisis. With a dramatic cut in state funds necessitated by Proposition 13, school district officials began to have second thoughts about leasing surplus school sites. In a reversal of its past policy, the SFUSD decided that the best use for the site was an income provider. The HASCC was never able to go forward with its program and the school district took the site back, hoping that some new user would come forward, offering more money for the site than could the community.

From 1978 to 1983 Poly stood empty, with the SFUSD unable to sell or lease it. Strapped for funds the SFUSD was unable to maintain the buildings on the site and vandalism and the elements took their toll on the school. But neighborhood and community concern about the future of the site continued. Periodic contact was made with SFUSD officials to monitor the staff’s actions, if any, concerning the site. Neighbors near the abandoned high school made periodic requests of the SFUSD to provide security on the site due to the presence of squatters on the site during the winter months. Several small fires were reported.

In early 1982, the Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO), a city wide coalition of eight community controlled and based non-profit development corporations committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing (of which the Haight-Ashbury Community Development Corporation was a founding member), convinced the Department of City Planning to designate 14 surplus school sites as being “housing opportunities on publicly owned land”. The Poly site was among the list which was officially added to the City’s Residence Element of the Master Plan in June, 1982.

If the SFUSD had no plans for Poly, the community did.

ROUND TWO: THE BATTLE WITH UCSF OVER POLY: 1983 TO 1985

As a result of the continuing community monitoring it was learned that the SFUSD had in June of 1983 received a \$25,000 payment for an exclusive option to negotiate a lease/purchase agreement from the University of California, San Francisco for Poly. Neighborhood groups were outraged at what they considered this “secret deal”, since no public hearing or announcement of the pending sale had been made by either school district staff or UCSF after promises had been made by the SFUSD that all interested neighborhood groups would be made part of the decision making process concerning the site.

Moreover, the option payment by UCSF was seen to be a direct violation of a precedent setting 1976 resolution passed by the Regents of the University barring UCSF from expanding its boundaries in the neighborhood.

UCSF’s role in the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset neighborhoods was controversial and feared. Growing to a massive 3.5 million square feet (equal to about seven Transamerica Pyramids) of facilities with an average daytime population of over 10,000. UCSF had simply overpowered the neighborhood. Between 1960 and 1975 UCSF, using its state granted powers of eminent domain had condemned and then taken over some 500 housing units in the neighborhood.

When it proposed to tear down forty more homes to expand its School of Dentistry in 1974, neighborhood opposition reached a fever pitch. In a bruising two year battle that went all the way to the Governor, a compromise was reached concerning the reduction in size of the Dentistry School and, for the first time in the history of the University of California, maximum growth limits were imposed on a UC campus by the Regents of the University.

The historic May 21, 1976 resolution of the UC Regents limited the total size of the campus, its population and fixed its boundaries at the current location. It also pledged to return homes taken by UCSF to “residential use”, keep Mt. Sutro open space “permanently”, and most importantly “prohibit expansion by UCSF by purchase or condemnation or gift of any property ... contiguous with the new campus boundaries.” The “new campus boundaries” ended on the south side of Carl Street and did not include Poly.

The proposed acquisition of Poly by UCSF was in direct opposition to this agreement. Neighborhood groups from both the Inner-Sunset and the Haight-Ashbury asked UCSF to clarify its position. The first public statement of the University came in a reply to a Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council letter of inquiry. In the July 1983 reply, the Chancellor told HANC that “the campus is still in the process of developing a feasible proposal for housing, parking and joint-use community facilities for the Poly site”.

In follow-up conversations between neighborhood activists and UCSF officials and SFUSD staff three points became clear: first, that neither party was going to discuss the UCSF proposal in detail since no proposal existed; second, any housing developed by UCSF on the site would be for its sole use, not for neighborhood residents; and third, neither UC nor the SFUSD wanted the neighborhood involved in their discussions.

If the neighborhood was going to have a say on what happened on the Poly site it was going to have to push its way in. That the neighborhood wanted to have a say stemmed from the fact that as a separate constitutional entity, the University of California is exempt from all local land use laws and procedures. If the SFUSD did in fact sell the site to UCSF, UCSF could, laterally do anything they want to do on the site and no one in San Francisco could say otherwise.

Neighborhood activists spent the rest of 1983 trying to find out what UCSF was going to do and what, if anything, the City was prepared to do about it. They also began talking to other community organizations who had had experience with dealing with the City over the development of public land. The Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO) members were very helpful during this “fact finding” period. So too were the efforts of the Lawyers Committee for Urban Affairs who provided information on state law governing the use of “surplus” school land as well as thoroughly researching the issues involved between lease of the site and sale of the site.

Slowly a counter plan emerged. The idea would be to have the City lease the land for the development of family housing and multi-purpose community center. But for this plan to work, substantial neighborhood support would have to be shown for the idea and the City would have to be made interested in the site. But most importantly, the “secret negotiations” between SFUSD staff and UCSF would have to be made public and the issues involved in such a sale made clear.

In late 1983 discussions began among representatives of five neighborhood organizations—HANC, the Stanyan/Fulton Street Neighborhood Association (SFNA), the Haight-Ashbury Community Development Corporation (HACDC), the Ecumenical Ministry to the Haight-Ashbury (409 House) and the Inner-Sunset Action Committee (ISAC) - to ascertain each organizations interest and resources for the development of a two neighborhood based Poly planning process. Each representative agreed to bring the matter up to the boards of each organization and urge support for such a process. By February of 1984 the five organizations formally endorsed the effort and active planning was underway for a series of neighborhood planning meetings in both the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset for April, 1984 that would lead to the formation of what would later become known as the Inner-Sunset Haight-Ashbury Polytechnic Coalition (ISHA POLY).

The key aspect of this early period was in getting the City to focus its attention on the Poly site. Initial contact was made with Mayor Feinstein through the CCHO, members of which were meeting with the Mayor on a regular basis trying to expand the City’s role in development of affordable housing. It was pointed out to the Mayor that UCSF was proposing a housing development for the Poly site that would be restricted to UC faculty and students. Parallel discussions occurred with Department of City Planning commissioners and staff assisted by neighborhood resident and HANC founder Commissioner Sue Bierman.

The difficulty during this period was that while it was known that UCSF was engaged in discussion with school district staff about Poly no one knew just what was being proposed by the University.

The first “showdown” on UCSF’s proposal occurred on February 7th, 1984 before the Buildings, Grounds and Services Committee of the Board of Education. School district staff had prepared a report purporting to be an “offer” from UCSF which called for the University to give the district \$1 million for a two year “option” for a 75 year lease/purchase agreement for the site. If the Regents declined to exercise the “option” the district could keep \$300,000. If the Regents decided to exercise the option they would pay an additional \$2.8 million for the purchase of the site. No description as to what the University was proposing to build on the site was in the report.

Neighborhood representatives were out in force at the February meeting urging the Committee not to accept the staff report. It was pointed out that the “offer” came from their own staff and was supported by no written document *from the University*. Moreover, the key to the “offer” was the outright purchase of the site by UCSF with no development proposal. Neighborhood representatives also pointed out that the sale of Poly would call into question the issue of ownership of the site. They urged that no deal should be made with UC that was a sale, that community access to the site had to be guaranteed, that UC had to disclose its full plans and should be made to plan the site in a manner that was consistent with local law.

The Committee agreed with the neighborhood’s positions and directed its staff to reject the “offer” and continue to negotiate with UCSF only for a lease agreement and only if UC clearly laid out the proposed development and planning process it was going to follow.

But things didn’t quite work out that way. School district staff at that time felt that they need not follow the directions of the Board of Education but only those of the Superintendent. Great strains existed between the

Board and the Superintendent over actual control of the District. Indeed, the strains were so great that after the November, 1984 School Board Elections which resulted in two new members being added to the Board, the Superintendent was fired. In the meantime, however, the disposition of Poly became an issue of control between staff and the Board. Staff simply ignored the Board and continued to try to sell Poly to UC.

Less than one month later, school district staff, in direct opposition to the School Board's February 7th directive, submitted a request to the Board of Supervisors to allow the district to sell the Poly site to UCSF for \$2.8 million. Approval of the Supervisors was necessary because of the clouded title issue. What school district staff was asking the Board to do was to give the SFUSD title to Poly so that they could sell it to UC!

Neighborhood representatives showed up at the March 7th meeting and informed the Finance Committee of the February 7th School Board committee action, pointing out that the request before them was opposite to the intent of the Board! This was news to the Supervisors and after confirmation of this fact the matter was tabled and no action was taken. It was later learned that no one in the Mayor's office and no one on the Board of Education even knew that the matter was before the Board of Supervisors. Things then began to happen very rapidly.

In early March two letters to the School District concerning Poly passed each other in the mail.

One, from Mayor Feinstein to the Superintendent, laid out, for the first time the City's interest in Poly. Although falling short of making an actual offer, the Mayor's letter did ask the School Board for "an opportunity to participate with you on the Poly site" and did say that "I am prepared to offer financial support toward the development of affordable housing on the site". The letter did not oppose UC acquiring the site but did say that "I am extremely concerned that the housing proposed would be for the exclusive use of the University students and personnel. It is my position that at least half of the housing built should be available to the general public".

The second letter was addressed to the Board of Education and came from the Chancellor of UCSF. The March 8th letter was the first time that UCSF publicly expressed its interest in the site and set out its plans for Poly. If the letter was meant to convince the Board that UCSF was in the bidding it fell short. On the crucial question of how much UCSF was willing to pay for Poly the letter was vague in the extreme.

"Regarding our interest in the property, as you know, the Treasurer's Office of the Regents ... has the responsibility to negotiate for real property. Given the unique characteristics of our relationship, I am confident that we be able to reach a mutually acceptable agreement".

The letter went on to say that the UCSF plan for the site was to demolish all existing structures on the site and build between 230 and 270 housing units ("20% studios, 40% one bedrooms and 40% two bedrooms ... for campus students, faculty and staff"), a 530 to 570 space parking garage and "additional recreation facilities to respond to campus and community needs." No mention was made about the University agreeing to follow local planning codes other to say "the entire development would stay within a 40 foot height."

These two letters are cited in such detail for they lay out the "political" parameters facing the neighborhood surrounding the issue for the next 14 months. What the neighborhood faced was UCSF with all of its resources proposing a specific development program but being very vague on the amount it was willing to pay for the site while the City, with all of its resources, was being vague about both development program and money. The School Board, in the midst of internal turmoil with staff and divided on the issue of firing the Superintendent, was also facing a major funding crisis in 1984-85 with a teacher strike looming as a real possibility unless their pay demands were met. None the less, The Board, now having two "deep pockets" interested in the same site, had enough unity to decide to play each off against the other in the hopes of generating a "bidding war" between the two. In the middle of all this were two neighborhoods trying to find a way to develop affordable housing and a multi-purpose community center which the community would design and control.

The maneuvering between and among all these parties became intense and went on for nearly a year and a half.

In late March the Mayor and the Chancellor met, in private, to see if some accommodation between the two could be achieved. It was reported that the Mayor offered City funds to assist in the development of the housing if 50% of the housing was made available to the general public. The Chancellor turned down the offer and made it plain to the Mayor that UCSF wanted the entire site for its own use. Only the garage and the “recreational facility” would be shared. The Mayor, angered by this rebuff, decided to go for the site for the City.

In May, through the good offices of Planning Commissioner Sue Bierman who had attended the ISHA POLY planning meetings in the Haight-Ashbury, the Mayor invited ISHA POLY to a series of meetings to discuss the community’s plan for Poly, resulting in her endorsement of the plans which called for affordable family housing and the development of a multi-purpose community center in the two gyms. At the suggestion of ISHA POLY, a Board of Supervisors resolution authorizing the City to formally negotiate with the SFUSD for the lease of Poly was prepared. The resolution would settle the issue raised by School Board members, who, suspicious of staff, were angered that the Mayor had only communicated with the Superintendent and that the City was not “formally” committed to leasing Poly.

The resolution, jointly sponsored by Supervisors Louise Renne and Nancy Walker, was drafted by ISHA POLY members. It made three main points: first, that UCSF offer for the site “to develop the site for housing for its faculty, students and staff ... violates previously reached agreements”; second, “the surrounding neighborhood and community has sought to develop ... the site to meet community needs [for} affordable housing, a multi-purpose cultural and recreational center and parking”; third “the Board of Supervisors ... supports investigation ... of the acquisition of the site ... for the development of affordable housing and other community needs.”

UCSF launched a major lobbying campaign to defeat the resolution. It failed and the resolution passed on June 13th, 1984 with only Supervisor Nedler voting against it.

On July 3rd Mayor Feinstein again wrote the Superintendent (not the Board President as urged by ISHA POLY) reiterating the City’s “interest in lease or purchase of the Polytechnic High School site.”

On September 13th the School Board voted to form a special committee to study the district’s options for the lease of Poly. With the formation of the special committee the “bidding war” reached a new level. One of the committees first acts was to direct its staff to study the question of whether a new high school was needed and if the Poly site should be kept for that new high school! The second major act of the committee was to recommend that the sale of the Poly site was no longer an option and only proposals for a lease of the site would be considered. This last action placed UCSF at a disadvantage because the Regents were not interested in a lease, only an outright purchase. But School Board member and special committee Chair Myra Kopf had another game plan in mind: swapping City land for a new school site in trade for Poly and some cash from the City.

The difficulty in putting the deal together was the deep hostility of a number of the School Board members with their own staff and the un-willingness of the Mayor to deal with any other person at the SFUSD other than the Superintendent. The Mayor directed her staff to only deal with the school district staff and no Board members. The Board wanted direct dealing with the Mayor. It fell upon ISHA POLY members to be the “midwife” in the “birth” of the deal.

In late October ISHA POLY finally succeeded in getting School Board members to list what land, other than Poly, they would like to have for a future school and to communicate that to the Mayor. On November 5th the Mayor, this time writing to the Chair of the Special Committee and not the staff, laid out her offer. For a 75 year lease for the site the City would pay the School District \$2.5 million. The City then would be willing to swap two parcels of land, one for a soccer field and one for a new school site if the School District would agree to give the City title for Michelangelo Playground in North Beach for the development of a neighborhood park.

While it took another six months for both parties to finally agree on the deal and the wording of the actual legal documents, including a set of amendments prepared by ISHA POLY to retain some or all existing

buildings on the site and to ensure that any housing on the site would be affordable to lower income residents. On May 30th, 1985 the lease was approved by a 6 to 1 vote of the Board of Education.

WHAT TO BUILD, WHO TO BUILD IT, AND WHEN WOULD IT BE BUILT?

From late 1983 through May of 1985 scores of meetings took place in the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset over the future of the Poly site. Not only did ISHA POLY sponsor four neighborhood planning “forums” (two each in the Haight-Ashbury and the Inner-Sunset) attended by some 300 residents and literally hundreds of “sub-committee” meetings on specific aspects of the development (housing, landscaping, parking, possible cultural and recreational uses for the community center, studies, surveys), but UCSF itself held a number of “campus planning committee” meetings in the neighborhood laying out its proposal for the site. At one point or another every neighborhood and community group in the two neighborhoods had Poly on their meeting agendas.

But it was the ISHA POLY Coalition, now grown to ten neighborhood organizations, that did the most extensive and detailed planning for the site. Between April 1984 and March of 1985 ISHA POLY developed nine site plans analyzing various housing, parking and community center configurations for the 3.2 acre site. In October 1985 ISHA POLY finished an exhaustive survey of all neighborhood serving facilities in both the Haight-Ashbury and Inner-Sunset to determine what kinds of uses would be needed in a community center at Poly. In February 1985 ISHA POLY received a \$250 grant from 409 House to engage Community Economics, a non-profit economic consultant firm, to do an economic feasibility study of an affordable housing development on the site. But the most vexing problem for ISHA POLY and the neighborhood was in trying to decide just how many of the existing buildings on the site could be re-used for the development.

Once again, CCHO provided assistance in resolving this matter. One of the members of CCHO was The Foundation for San Francisco’s Architectural Heritage, a non-profit organization committed to adaptive re-use of older buildings. Through CCHO’s discussion of the Poly site in 1983, Heritage became interested in the issue. It joined with the neighborhood groups in opposing the UCSF plan for Poly which called for demolishing all the buildings.

ISHA POLY after its first series of neighborhood planning forums, found that the primary interest and need in the two neighborhoods was for housing large enough to accommodate families with children. How to develop such housing in the 130,000 square foot Main Academic Building was a major question the ISHA POLY wanted to study. In June 1984 ISHA POLY retained Heritage to do a study of how to re-habilitate the Main Academic Building for family housing. Almost from the start Heritage’s eagerness to retain older buildings overweighed its interest in coming up with a design that would work with families with children.

Heritage took some seven months to arrive at a design. The final design was less than overwhelming. The Heritage plan contained a total of 154 units. 88 in the Main Academic Building, 41 in the Shops Building and 25 in a new building proposed to be built on the already heavily packed site. All but seven of the family units (3 bedrooms) were in the Shops Building along Carl Street, the most “urban” side of the project with heavy traffic. Moreover, to accommodate 186 parking spaces an underground parking structure would have to be built as well as gutting the West (Boys) gym to be used for parking as well. Of the 154 units, more than half (68) were either one bedroom apartments or studios. The biggest shock was the price tag: \$35,603,000!

In March, 1985 ISHA POLY reluctantly decided that rehab was simply too expensive and provided too many small units incompatible with its goal of affordable family housing. Moreover, many member organizations were opposed to gutting the West gym in order to make a parking lot, wanting instead to use it as a gym. From that point on Heritage took the position that unless its or a similar re-hab plan was adopted it would oppose the project. This it did.

In May 1985 ISHA POLY at two neighborhood forums adopted Site Plan 9 as its preferred plan. The plan called for the demolition of the Main Academic and Shops Buildings, the retention of the two Gyms and the construction of 140 to 150 new units with 140 to 150 parking spaces. 75% of the units were to be multi-bedroom units suitable for households with children. They should be offered for sale, and not be rental units. Both gyms were to be retained and managed by a newly created non-profit providing sports and fitness

Facilities, arts and cultural uses and community service uses including meeting space and a child care center.

In September 1985, after the Board of Supervisors had voted to accept the May 30 lease agreement passed by the School Board, Mayor Feinstein appointed an eleven person Citizens Advisory Committee on Polytechnic High School to advise her staff on selecting a developer for the site. Six of the eleven members of the committee were ISHA POLY members and the committee was chaired by Sue Bierman.

For the next eight months the committee, after getting the Mayor's agreement that no developer not selected by the committee would be considered for the development, drafted the Request for Proposal for the site, interviewed nine developers who applied and selected the final development team and drafted the terms of the sub lease given the developer for the site. Because of the extensive study given the site by ISHA POLY, its preferred plan became the basis for the City's plan, with one exception. The gyms would not be made part of the offering and would be saved.

That one exception was that the Request for Proposal would still consider a rehab proposal for saving all the buildings on the site. ISHA POLY members wanted to give that possibility one more chance.

Of the nine proposals submitted, seven were new construction and two were rehab. By late April, 1986 the nine had been reduced to two: a new construction proposal and a rehab/new construction proposal. After having both development teams refine their proposals and after getting the City to agree to pay for any demolition and thus not require the housing to pay for that cost, (both plans required some demolition) keeping prices down, the committee, on June 19th selected the Bridge/Pacific Union proposal for new construction.

During the additional study of the site by the committee, the density of the project and the need to maximize off street parking became major issues. The committee pushed each developer to add more parking and reduce the density of the housing to the absolute minimum. This created strong tension with the City. The City had hoped to get as many as 180 units on the site. ISHA POLY had favored fewer units (140-150). The City's concern was that it had already paid \$2.5 million for the lease and, at the committee insistence, put another \$1 million on the table to cover demolition (the \$1 million would be forgiven if the developer produced the project at a lower price and passed the savings on to the buyers in the form of a lower purchase price). It wanted the most units for its dollars. But the committee, made up of community residents, knew that the neighborhood favored as less dense a project as possible. Indeed, a major cause for the selection of the Bridge/Pacific Union proposal was that while it had fewer units (124) than the other proposal, it had more off street parking (over 150 spaces) and the units it did have were larger than the competing proposal. Indeed, as the selected plan went through more refinement of units was further reduced to 114 and the off street parking spaces increased to 174.

Once the developer had been selected, the first step to the actual construction on the long awaited project was the rezoning of the site from P (public) to RH-3 (the same zoning as the surrounding neighborhood).

OPPOSITION FROM A NEW SOURCE: POLY HELP HOSTAGE 1986 TO 1988

At the Planning Commission hearing on the rezoning on July 17 a new source of opposition presented itself in the shape of a wealthy Marin County doctor/developer by the name of J. Alfred Rider.

Dr. Rider opposed the rezoning because it had no Environmental Impact Report. His representative at the hearing claimed that when Dr. Rider proposed to demolish some ten residential buildings he owned across the street from Poly in 1982 in order to build a "medically oriented hotel", the City required that he had to have an EIR. Now, his spokesman said, the City was going to build a housing at Poly and did not require itself to do an EIR.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which sets out the requirements for such reports clearly states that a local government is exempt from such a report if it proposes to allow a housing development in an area already in residential use. The City argued that since the area was already zoned RH-3, rezoning the Poly site to the same density for a housing use did not require an EIR. The Planning Commission passed the rezoning. But Dr. Rider did not give up that easy.

Not long after the Planning Commission meeting, Dr. Rider's spokesman at the meeting, saying that he represented Dr. Rider, met with the director of the Mayor's Office of Housing and set out his "demands". Rider, the spokesman said, would back off his opposition to the project if the Mayor would support the rezoning of his property across the street and allow him to build his hotel. No hotel, no Poly was the offer. The offer was refused, and a complaint made to the District Attorney about the meeting.

Not long after the meeting, the Mayor's Office received a letter from a new "neighborhood" group of people living around Poly. This group claimed that it had never heard of the proposed project and that it was opposed to the project going forward without the EIR. Since the Advisory Committee and ISHA POLY had met with many of these neighbors and had indeed invited them to participate in the advisory committee's deliberations, these charges seemed groundless.

As matters turned out it seems that the Rider "spokesman" had gone door to door in the neighborhood claiming that what was proposed for Poly was a "massive public housing project". By October, Rider had paid for a petition drive to overturn the rezoning through a referendum. But the good doctor did not stop there. He also went to court, suing the City for not preparing an EIR for the project.

Rider got the measure on the ballot and payed for one of the most bruising campaigns in recent memory. At one point the neighborhood around Poly was leafleted with an anonymous flyer (in violation of state campaign law which require all campaign material to state who paid for it) which stated in large white on black print "Don't worry, cancer causing asbestos dust from the demolition of Poly High will only kill you!" (the asbestos issue was one first raised by the advisory committee when it requested the City to conduct a survey of Poly to see if any was there. There was and great care was given that the City pay for its proper removal. This was done with no incident. The committee also requested that the material be removed from the gyms and the developers agreed to do so at their own expense. The gyms are now clean as well).

In June of 1987 Rider's measure was defeated at the polls by a resounding 60-40% margin. The vote in the precinct that surrounds Poly and was claimed to be represented by the new "neighborhood" organization voted for Poly by a margin greater than the citywide vote.

But the matter didn't end there. Rider came back in late 1987 with another referendum on Poly, this time on the development agreement passed by the Board of Supervisors allowing the development to begin construction. This time the City took the matter to court and had the matter thrown off the ballot. The "neighborhood" organization then sued the City for taking the measure off the ballot.

With the election of Art Agnos, Rider and the "neighborhood" organization approached the new Mayor and asked him to "mediate" the matter. In a series of meetings with the Mayor in early 1988 the position of the parties was clarified. Rider wanted the City to pay for his campaign expenses and lawyers fees. If the City did, then he would drop his remaining suit against the project. The neighbors wanted their lawyers fees payed by the City and more parking for them. They suggested that the West gym might be torn down and a parking structure built for their use on the site. The Mayor refused to use City funds to pay off the lawsuits. Agnos did suggest that the developer might be willing to pay. He was willing to entertain the idea of tearing down the gym, but after a tense meeting with ISHA POLY members, he withdrew that idea. The "neighbors" were insistent that more parking be provided. At one point one of their spokesman stated "we don't care about affordable housing, we only care about our parking problems". Another complained that the housing units were too "affordable" and not in keeping with the neighborhood character because "the units have too many bedrooms and this is not a family neighborhood".

The developer, eager to get on with the project suggested a compromise. Sixteen of the 44 four bedroom units were smaller than the others. He suggested that they be "re-classified" as three bedroom units, thus reducing the bedroom count of the project from 328 to 312, a majorpoint for the "neighbors". Moreover, the developer claimed that if the City was willing to spend the additional money, 18 additional parking spaces could be placed on the project, bring the total to 192 off street spaces. But even this concession did not satisfy the "neighbors". They wanted the City to pay for their lawyer. The meeting ended in an impasse

Seven months later, the “neighbors” agreed to drop their lawsuit and accept the deal, minus their lawyer fees. In September, 1988 ground was broken on the site and the first foundations were laid for the housing.

And that’s how the housing was built at Poly.

Calvin Welch