

Jury picks Hines for Transbay tower

By: J.K. Dineen

September 10, 2007

Developer Hines and architects Pelli Clarke Pelli have won the Transbay competition and, pending another approval from the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, will enter into exclusive negotiations to build a 1,300-foot tower and state-of-the-art train and bus station at Mission and First streets.

The winning Transbay terminal proposal by developer Hines and architect Pelli Clarke Pelli offered \$350 million for the tower property, more than twice what the other two teams were willing to pay, according to the nine-person jury appointed by the Transbay Joint Powers Authority.

The astounding offer blew away the team ranked second in the competition, Richard Rogers Partnership and Forest City Enterprises, which offered \$145 million for the tower land. The third-place team, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Rockefeller Group Development Corp., made a purchase price offer of \$118 million.

"The exceptional financial offer put forth by the recommended team will increase the funds available to the Transbay Transit Center Program to \$1.85 billion," said Maria Ayerdi, executive director of the TJPA. "Since our inception, we have been successful at fully funding the first phase of our program, and this offer builds upon that success to deliver necessary funding to help complete the rail extension," said Ayerdi.

The jury called all the proposals "exceptional" but ruled unanimously that the Pelli/Hines proposal "best met the TJPA's operational, functional, and aesthetic requirements. The Hines project calls for an 82-story obelisk-shaped tower with a 5.5-acre park atop the terminal itself.

The unanimous recommendation culminates an eight-month international design and development competition that was launched to select an outstanding and functional design that is economically viable and provides a sound economic return to the TJPA.

The jury report is at the beginning of a long negotiation process with the city. If the TJPA board goes along with the recommendation, the project would still need approvals from the city Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. "The prize you get for winning this competition is entry into the San Francisco entitlement process," said Paul Paradis, Hines executive vice president.

The jury based its evaluation and ranking on how well each team's proposal met the evaluation criteria as listed in the competition manual. Scores, which were given by individual jurors and summed to derive each team's overall ranking, analyzed such criteria as design excellence, functionality and financial feasibility.

The new Transbay Transit Center at First and Mission streets would centralize the region's transportation network by accommodating eight transportation systems under one roof, including AC Transit, Caltrain, Muni, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, Greyhound, BART and a future California High-Speed Rail line. The area surrounding the Transit Center will be redeveloped to include housing, retail and an adjacent tower poised to redefine the city's skyline.

At a recent Chamber of Commerce presentation of the three plans, Paradis called the proposal "a real project."