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Subject: City of Brisbane talks won"t divert 49ers" focus from Santa Clara
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Brisbane talks won't divert 49ers' focus from Santa Clara
By Denis C. Theriault and Mike Swift
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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT (publ. 05/15/08, page 2A)
An article about the San Francisco 49ers' stadium discussions with Brisbane incorrectly stated the city does not have a Caltrain stop. Caltrain's Bayshore station is in Brisbane.
The Brisbane 49ers?
Team officials have been quietly chatting about a stadium with the small city on San Francisco's doorstep, a sleepy burg of 3,500 with neither a Caltrain nor a BART stop. The talks come ahead of crucial milestones involving the team's two other main suitors for a new home: San Francisco will vote June 3 on a stadium redevelopment project at Hunters Point, while the front-runner, Santa Clara, hopes to have a financing plan with the team by July.
So does Brisbane's emergence mean team officials are looking to hedge their bets? Yes - and no.
The 49ers remain focused on Santa Clara, where negotiations have recently intensified. And Brisbane? City leaders say the team recently approached them about adding a stadium to a development considered on an old waterfront landfill known as the Baylands. It remains a longshot, a team spokeswoman said Tuesday - more insurance policy, at this point, than anything else.
"It's about providing more options," said Lisa Lang, the 49ers spokeswoman. "The more alternative locations we have, the better."
But that longshot could receive a more serious look later this summer. Polls show voters in San Francisco could help scuttle the Hunters Point project by supporting a competing measure that calls for more affordable housing on the site that developers fear would make the project untenable.
And stadium opponents have questioned whether a deal to build a $916 million stadium in Santa Clara, on a Great America parking lot, will actually materialize, given the theme park owner's objections and other financial differences.
With a deadline approaching, Santa Clara and the 49ers have added a second weekly negotiation session.
One major item the 49ers and the city are discussing, Assistant City Manager Ron Garratt said, is a direct land-lease payment that the 49ers would make to Santa Clara's general fund. The team's original proposal calls for $5 million in yearly rent to a new, city-run stadium authority, but no direct payments to the general fund.
The city also is holding firm on a proposed $136 million investment toward the facility, plus $42 million for a parking garage and the cost of relocating a utility substation.
Garratt declined to speculate whether the talks will succeed. He also noted the continuing, parallel talks between the 49ers and Cedar Fair, the Ohio-based owner of Cedar Fair, about a possible sale of the theme park to the team.
Last month, the city sent a letter to Cedar Fair stating it could go forward with the 68,500-seat project without the theme park operator's approval. But doing so would raise other hurdles, including a costly requirement to build extra parking. The theme park leases city land and is guaranteed parking nearby.
Of course, the fact that discussions have been progressing in Santa Clara - a non-binding ballot measure is planned for November - has kept the city ahead of San Francisco.
That comes even though voters appear to be favoring Proposition G - a development plan for more than 700 acres at Hunters Point and Candlestick Point that would feature a 49ers stadium along with about 10,000 housing units, retail space, and industrial and commercial space.
But Mayor Gavin Newsom's administration is extremely worried about Proposition F, a competing measure that would require half of that housing to be affordable. City officials say that if F carries, it would effectively kill the plan.
Given the millions of dollars needed to revitalize the former Hunters Point shipyard and Candlestick Point, "a 50 percent below-market requirement is utterly and completely infeasible," said Michael Cohen, the San Francisco

official overseeing the Hunters Point project.
Lennar, the developer selected by San Francisco to develop Hunters Point and Candlestick Point, calls Prop. F a "poison pill."
So what does Brisbane City Manager Clay Holstine think of all this? He's waiting, too.
"It's in everyone's interest to keep some options on the table," he said of a stadium landing on his city's waterfront. "Brisbane isn't saying this is absolutely the use we want - we're just saying we're open to looking at it."