

Presidio Bay Ventures and Springline: A Lesson in Placemaking on the Peninsula

December 2, 2020



By [Meghan Hall](#)

This past fall, San Francisco-based commercial real estate investment firm Presidio Bay Ventures took over the construction and stabilization of a critical mixed-use development in Menlo Park named Springline. The 6.4-acre project, described as a “city within a city” by Presidio Bay, has been a big lesson in purposeful placemaking, according to Manager Director Cyrus Sanandaji.

“What was fascinating for us was being able to take the location in downtown Menlo Park and create a nexus between Santa Cruz Avenue with all of its retail and restaurants and connect it down to El Camino,” explained Sanandaji. “...One of the biggest things we often see in downtowns, whether urban or suburban, is that oftentimes the downtown is not what you would consider to be a 24/7 activated space or area. It’s generally more focused on the nine-to-five.”

The project was first pitched to the Menlo Park Planning Department in 2012 by Menlo Park-based Greenheart. Originally dubbed “Station 1300,” construction on the project kicked off in 2017 after an intense entitlements process and pushback from the community. After failing to sign commercial or retail leases, Presidio Bay purchased the project this past summer.

Presidio Bay has since worked to rebrand and reimagine several components of the project in an effort to attract new tenants. A huge component of the rebranding is ensuring vibrancy and activity. The ultimate goal, stated Sanandaji, is to have engagement happening with the development and adjacent CalTrain station throughout the entire course of the day, as opposed to simply business hours. The layering of not just office and retail, but housing and open space at scale, will be utilized to accomplish this end.

“With Springline, one of the great opportunities was to create a density that really was interdependent,” said Sanandaji. “Having housing there...creates a demand that then would in turn support the restaurants and other retailers, not just at our project but broadly.”

To have a live-work-play development in a downtown, added Sanandaji, is often atypical, as developers often will pursue a single office or residential tower.

“Generally you have a large office or a large residential, but never two projects combined to create those synergies and that destination,” Sanandaji said.

Upon its completion, the project will include 183 one-, two- and three-bedroom units. The community will feature a pool, fitness facility, concierge services, outdoor living rooms and kitchens. Concierge services, as well as design partnerships, are also available to residents.



Springline will also include two, 100,000 square foot Class A office buildings. The buildings will feature neutral material palettes of mixed-metals, raw wood, open air staircases and high ceilings. Large windows for light and activation are also included. A number of retail and food spaces will be available and embrace a mix of lively bar concepts, experimental retail, pop-ups, and coffee, which will cater not just to office workers but the development's full-time residents. Two acres of privately owned but publicly accessible open space—spaces that Presidio Bay hopes to activate through community events in the future—is also in the works.

However, while many of the main specs of the project remained the same, Presidio Bay took a close look at the physical design implications of the buildings and implemented a number of changes. These alterations would be geared not just towards health and wellness, but to the idea that the project is in the heart of the tech capital of the world. Sanandaji stated that once built, those aspects of design are often quite difficult or costly to change.

"It's really important to get that right at the onset," noted Sanandaji. "That's why we took a scalpel to the plans. We sought to develop a design that would not be functionally obsolete on day one."

Presidio Bay worked to redesign the residential and office spaces in an effort to "future proof" the project, with increased access, access control, security and health and wellness playing a large role. App-based solutions for both residential and commercial tenants will be implemented, as well as frictionless and touchless experiences. Upgraded HVAC and mechanical systems will also be put into place.

“Our entire thesis was that this was really a testing ground and the project itself is an incubator for technology,” said Sanandaji.

The commercial buildings will be delivered at the beginning of 2021, with office and retail tenants moving in in the summer. According to Sanandaji, commercial leases are nearing completion. Presidio Bay declined to comment on who will be the project’s new office tenants. The residential portion of the project will be following suit in the fall, and residents will move in at the end of the year. The project team is hopeful that once open, Springline will be a modern village and destination for companies and residents in Menlo Park.

“People are at the forefront of everything we do. Intuitive technology, attention to every last detail, and one-of-a-kind programming connect our residents, businesses, and neighbors, creating a place that can grow with the community and evolve into a fully reimagined epicenter for Silicon Valley,” said Sanandaji. “What we’ve shared today is only the beginning and we look forward to unveiling much more in the weeks and months ahead.”